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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Mothers in Teaching: The Career Stories of Three Women

BY

©

Laurie E. Bowers

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta
SPRING, 1993

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Berta Young

B. Young

January 29, 1993

Date

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the women whose lives created possibilities for mine:

> My grandmothers, Lillian Kate Bowers (b. 1903) and Margaret Esther Green (b. 1913), and my loving mother, Gail Evelyn Allford (b. 1940).

Their unconditional love and care created a space for me to be myself.

Mothers in Teaching: The Career Stories of Three Women

Abstract

This narrative inquiry tells of the experiences of three women returning to teaching following several years at home with their own children. It is an inquiry into the complexities of their lives, the stories they tell of being changed as teachers through their experiences as mothers. Through conversations, their stories are painted as portraits of their lives.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the application for graduate studies in elementary education, I was required to submit a summary, a curriculum vitae of my education background and career as a teacher. Later, as I attended courses in my first year of graduate work, I was often asked to list my teaching experiences. In response to both requests, I gave a chronological list of my teaching at various grade levels in several school divisions, followed by a listing of the inservices I had provided for teachers and, finally, noted my most recent position as an assistant principal. This was my public/professional story (Biklen, 1986; Heilbrun, 1988), the story I told on application forms and described during job interviews. The story so told seems hierarchical and sequenced, a highlighting of carefully planned achievements. I felt comfortable that these accomplishments had prepared me well for my graduate school journey into the world of theories and research on teaching.

Because of my experiences in collaborative curriculum planning, I found myself immersed in the literature on curriculum, that is, planning, implementation, change, evaluation, and administration. I came across as many definitions of curriculum as there were studies looking at the phenomenon. My research journey tells of how I have come to speak about curriculum and how I am beginning to find a language to express what I believe it to be.

In my journey through curriculum theory, I found myself constantly going back to my experiences in the classroom, to search for the meaning of curriculum in the context of these experiences. These experiences are the stories I used to share in the safe, private spaces created between colleagues and friends. I have many I remember fondly, as images of particular children who deeply touched my life surface and resurface. Others are difficult to tell, particularly those of children at risk.

During my first year of graduate level coursework, I began to tell these stories in new communities and discovered the power of writing them down. These accounts of my work were much richer and more meaningful than the carefully constructed curriculum vitae I had originally submitted. In order to construct these narratives, I drew upon my experiences and found, as have many other women teachers (Spencer, 1986), that the professional could not be separated from the personal. Connelly and Clandinin (in press) wrote, "at every moment in our lives, whether we are in class or not, our entire person is there: our past is there" (pp. 7,8). I found myself reaching into the past where stories from my childhood and my own schooling emerged that tell of how I have come to my way of knowing as a woman and a teacher.

Connelly and Clandinin (in press) wrote about living our lives as stories:

> We think of life almost as one thinks of a work of fiction: we have one or many plot lines; we are a character in our own stories; others become characters in our stories; we live our stories in cultural and social settings that shape the stories we live and tell; we are gendered characters; we are characters in other's stories. (p. 8)

The stories that I told in my classes, to my graduate student colleagues and through my journal writing, reflected the complexities of my teaching. Where my chronological description, what appeared on my curriculum vitae, was a surface account of my career, I found narrative to be a means of getting to the depths, a way of drawing a more authentic picture of my life as a teacher.

In the process of telling my stories of teaching, I awakened "to the possibility of retellings" (Clandinin and Connelly, in press, p. 17), to new ways of looking at not only the way I wrote my curriculum vitae but also at the way I understood my career. Through reading, writing, talking, and journalling, I no longer saw it as a carefully planned series of achievements. I instead began to see it as a composite of the many stories I have lived and how my classroom curriculum was/is what each of us, the students, parents, teachers, and I, brought as our stories. We came with our own curriculum stories each day, the stories of our lives, and through those stories we shaped our classroom curriculum.

I wanted to know how other teachers saw their careers and so my research journey drew me to the literature on teachers' careers (Burke, Christensen, & Fessler, 1984; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985) and teacher development (Burden, 1990; Campbell, 1986; Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972). They told of a view of teachers as progressing through a series of developmental stages in their careers. Because of the discoveries I was making about my own career stories, I was more interested in a larger picture, that is, how we change and grow in all aspects of our lives and how that growth shapes and becomes the curriculum stories lived in our classrooms.

My own career stories tell of change and adaptation, like the stories Bateson (1989) shares in her accounts of five women who live lives of multiple beginnings and improvisation. The stories of the many teachers with whom I have worked closely also tell of the complexities of women's lives, as they live with multiple commitments. Their commitments to their own families, as well as their profession, intensified the complexities of their lives, and they often spoke of how their experiences with their own children became their classroom curriculum stories. The stories of mothers are very much a part of my own stories of childhood and my work as a teacher. I knew from my journey through the literature that these stories needed to be told. What are the stories of mothers in teaching? How do these stories translate into the curriculum stories lived in classrooms? How can we begin to show these stories as part of our personal/professional career stories, our curriculum vitaes?

The Study

This study is an inquiry into the lives of three women teachers, Darlene, Libby, and Margie, whose experiences involve returning to the classroom after having spent several years as full time mothers at home.

Through conversations, their stories are painted as portraits of their lives. This is an inquiry into the complexities of their lives, their stories of being changed as teachers through their experiences as mothers.

This inquiry begins with my authentic curriculum vitae, the one I want to begin to tell as my public story, for these stories are with me throughout the research journey. They are lived in my hands and my eyes as researcher/artist, composing portraits of women's lives.

My stories tell of cultivation, that is, "when someone acts intentionally upon someone else in order to change them, to prepare them for something", awakenings to new ways of seeing the world, and transformations where we live the new ways of seeing our lives (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation, p. 2). As an ongoing journey, it is the circle of cultivation, awakening, and transformation, that tells of my growth in teaching, and the mothers and *grand* mothers who walked with me as my guides.

Chapter 2

My Career Story

My earliest memory of school is of a day in my Grandma B's classroom. Her story of becoming a teacher tells of beginning in a one-room rural school house when she was seventeen, fresh from being a student and teaching her younger brothers and sisters. She left after a couple of years to have and raise her own four children, with my father being her youngest. She soon found herself as a mother alone and for several years supported her family by renting a small house and taking in boarders. In her early fifties, she decided to return to teaching and began the difficult task of upgrading her education and taking a year at Normal School. An image I have painted is of a story she once told me of the frustration she felt in taking math again, a subject she found difficult but was required for her entrance into Normal School. I could picture her with my uncle who helped her, pouring over the textbook long into the night. She was a woman with tremendous strength and determination.

Grandma B. earned her teaching certificate and taught grade three at a rural school for ten years until her retirement in the late sixties. I remember how I loved to hear about her class as she showed me pictures of her students and told stories of their days at school. Not yet in school myself, I envied them and could hardly wait to be in grade one. Grandma B. was clearly devoted to her work, a sense shared by the woman who was the principal of the school. My grandma spoke of the support she felt from the principal and they became close friends, dedicated to the children they taught.

One day when I was five, I went to school with Grandma B. I remember a large, sunny room with lots of windows and plants. The desks were all in rows and I spent most of the day colouring at a table at the back of the room. I remember a feeling of comfort and warmth. The children seemed to work quietly during class as Grandma B. walked around to help them. She was calm and loving, a very maternal teacher. Many students stayed in touch with her over the years and their Christmas cards and letters filled her apartment every December.

I was the only grandchild who visited her classroom and was often told I was much like Grandma B. She told me that I would make a wonderful teacher as well. I neither denied nor envisioned this as a possibility but only knew I would be attending University when I grew up.

My maternal grandmother, known to everyone as Nan, also treasured the wonder and excitement of childhood and derived a great deal of pleasure in watching me grow and learn. I remember her cosy kitchen where I would sit on the floor and play while she did her baking in the mornings. Later, Nan and I would colour at the kitchen table while she told stories of her own life.

Through stories, my grandmothers taught me how to take care of myself. Their devotion to me gave me a deep sense of how much being cared for shapes a life. To know what it feels like to be cared for is to know the possibilities for caring for others.

Awakenings

The majority of my school experiences told of received knowledge from textbooks and teachers (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). I did well. I was awakened in seventh grade to the experience of learning through discovery. My social studies teacher provided opportunities for us to work on group projects that reflected our understanding of life in ancient Rome and Egypt. My group members and I became completely immersed in the literature that told stories of those times and we revelled in the excitement of constructing our own interpretations of the lives of the people. I can now see how I saw a way of living a story of "constructed knowing" where knowledge is viewed as contextual and constructed by the learner (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 137).

In my early teens, the divorce of my parents was, for me, an awakening to the adult world. I watched my mother live the exhausting story of trying to fulfil all of our needs without a husband. My aunt, with whom I am also very close, was living the same story as she struggled to work full time during the day and, to go to school in the evening while raising her three children. The two families essentially became one as my mother and my aunt drew support from each other in their struggles to provide for six children. Nan completed our new picture of family as she provided a stable and safe place for us to escape from the day-to-day struggles we all encountered. She nourished us both physically and emotionally and listened as we told of our day-to-day dilemmas.

It was through the strength and support of these mothers that we were able to survive but, for me, the experience was an awakening to the life of a single parent, a story told primarily by women (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). These experiences cultivated new meaning for the importance of obtaining a degree. I saw it as a ticket to my independence. I would not have to live the stories of struggles of the women in my life without the choices and opportunities that a higher education would supposedly offer. I became driven to provide for myself, to make sure that I would have control over my destiny. To finance my education, I worked at a part-time job while attending university.

The professionals in my family were teachers and from them, I saw teaching as a secure, respectable occupation that offered opportunities to change, opportunities I could control. My education degree was a means to an end, and much of my undergraduate experiences told of my continued success in the system that would give me my piece of paper.

Communities of Teachers

A thread of continuity woven throughout my own teaching is one of working in communities. I remember this as early as my student teaching. Although I was assigned to work with a grade one teacher, she and the other two grade one teachers were very connected in their planning and sharing. I became a fourth member of this community. I lived in their classrooms and was carefully coached by all three women mentors. The principal of the school also encouraged and supported me in my work as a beginning teacher and found a way for me to intern at the school for the last two months of the school year. She and I worked together in teaching grade six math, and she made sure I gained experience in a combined three/four class as well as in grade five. I felt ready for my own classroom and, although offered a position at this school, I decided to take one in a community several miles away. I wanted to move to a new city as a way of proving my independence. My interview for this position had been as a conversation with the assistant superintendent and I felt comfortable that I would find a home in her school division. She offered me a grade two position and showed me the school that day. Her welcome gave me the sense that I would be supported in my work.

I arrived at the school in early August to begin setting up my classroom and was surprised to find I was alone. I was the first beginning teacher the school had hired in several years and I was impatient to begin. After spending several days getting the classroom ready, low enrolments on the first day of school meant that I was transferred to a kindergarten through grade nine Community School. I remember being disappointed at leaving but had heard stories of my new school as a vibrant, busy community. I was excited, and, with the energy of a new teacher, embraced the change.

I spent long evenings moving and adjusting to the new setting for I had missed all of the beginning of the year groundwork as well as the relationships fostered through the conversations teachers engage in as they plan their classrooms. I was, however, immediately welcomed by the principal, a leader in developing and implementing the community school model. A new and elaborately equipped plant, the building consisted of two schools, both public and separate. Each school housed over five hundred students. In the middle was an indoor swimming pool, an ice arena, and a public library. It was a busy centre with children, parents, and other community members actively involved in teaching and learning long after the school day was over.

When I began to teach in my own classroom, I brought with me, as explained by Britzman (1986), "cultural myths" of the image of teacher (p. 448). These myths, cultivated in the majority of my own schooling, called up images of teachers controlling power, authority, and knowledge. However, I also brought my own experiences of learning through discovery from my early childhood, my experiences in grade seven, and my student teaching. With my own class of grade two students, I saw how the prescriptiveness of the ways of teaching and learning I had primarily experienced as a student were not comfortable for the children I was teaching. I continued to live with the contradictions between what I knew from my own experiences and what was comfortable for the children, for I also knew what the system expected from me. My goal was to obtain my permanent certificate, and with it, a sense of security. To do so, I spent the first few months living the story of the beginning teacher told for me by Burden (1990), Fuller (1969), and Katz (1972). They tell of the perception of beginning teachers as having concern for discipline and dependence upon prescribed documents as the "curriculum". I was evaluated according to how successful I was at both of the above and it would appear I lived the "recipes" others imposed on me (Greene, 1974, p. 74).

I remember one story in particular from my first year that tells of the ongoing cultivation of my belief in children as discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge. In February, the first space shuttle was launched. The children were thrilled and fascinated as they followed the pre-launch excitement in the news so I brought in a television to watch the launch. They cheered when the shuttle lifted off. They spent the rest of the day talking and drawing pictures about the event. Over the next few days, they brought in space books and pictures and our curriculum became the stories they brought. We talked about the history of space travel and they became interested in the planets and stars. Their journals came alive as they wrote stories using complex, difficult vocabulary. I brought in some large appliance boxes and my space travellers built their own rocket, gluing on knobs, cutting out windows, constructing a very functional entrance, and painting elaborate designs all over. They labelled the rocket and the room with the words they were using in their travels and, for the first time, I saw what hard work play is. They continued to amaze me when the school division science specialist came in and built model rockets with them. Many of the children were quite comfortable with learning and talking about rocket ignition and how various fuels interact. They taught each other and I found myself stepping back and following their lead.

Paralleling this story was my growing connection with Joanne, a grade one teacher down the hallway, a mother who was raising her three young children alone. Her classroom was different from any I had seen for her students had large open spaces to work in and were engaged in activities that they had initiated and constructed, with her guidance and support. Her experiences with her own children were reflected in the way her classroom was created. She had removed her desks, much to the objection of the custodian, and had replaced them with several tables. Instead of following the prescribed reading series, a great deal of her program was based on poetry, music, and drama. The children created, wrote, and read their own stories.

I found myself spending as much time as I could with Joanne, both in and out of school. We talked about our teaching and went to early childhood conferences where we could share our stories with other teachers. With a vision of teaching and learning different from most, Joanne struggled to live within the system, finding support from women she had connected with in her work in early childhood programs for her own children. As my mentor, Joanne continued to cultivate the ways of knowing that I intuitively felt were the ways in which children learned.

I decided to move at the end of my second year and was offered a grade one position at a large open area school near my home city. I retold the story of the beginning teacher but again, whenever possible, we (the students and I) engaged in constructing new stories of learning. I signed a permanent contract and felt, once again, in control of my career. I moved to grade five for three years and continued to find new ways of teaching/learning through drama and literature. A close colleague showed me how she was planning thematically, and we began to teach and plan collaboratively, taking down the blackboards that had divided our rooms. I began to see so many connections in the curriculum and how the curriculum could make more sense to children. At this time, I considered applying for a leave of absence to travel and to return to University.

Changing Plans

Heilbrun (1988) wrote that a young woman who is the child of an unhappy marriage will respond either by assuring herself that her marriage will be different or will avoid marriage altogether. My decisions about marriage were a combination of both and I was comfortable and happy constructing a life by myself.

While making plans for my year leave, I met a man who shared my story of feeling comfortable being single and our decision to marry was based on wanting to be with each other rather than not wanting to live alone. We both value the importance of shared decision making and, since Craig lived in a town several miles away, we discussed at length the implications for either of us moving and giving up our jobs. As is the case with many married women teachers (Kennedy, 1992; Young, 1989), my job was perceived as offering more flexibility of movement than his so I decided to move to the town he lived in. I found it very difficult to give up my teaching position, so instead applied for and was granted a leave of absence.

Craig and I talked about the implications of marriage for our careers. He would be viewed as more stable and committed since he would have the responsibility of supporting a family (Gaskell, McLaren, & Novogrodsky, 1989). I, on the other hand, would have difficulty obtaining a position because it would be viewed that at my age, I would likely be having children. As Biklen (1986) and Evetts (1990) tell us, marriage and children are viewed by many as an interruption of a woman's career and an indication of a lack of commitment to one's profession. By the time we returned from our honeymoon, Craig had received a promotion, clearly because of our marriage, and I was looking for a job.

An offer to teach a combined five/six class came just before the school year began. However, after a week at this school, low enrolment meant that I had to move to a grade one class at a different school. I had been out of early childhood for a few years and, although I was excited about the position, I was anxious about teaching younger children. I was, in a sense, a beginning teacher again in this new community as I found myself faced with program changes and adjusting to the age difference.

The assistant superintendent of this school division offered monthly supper gatherings for teachers in elementary education. I went thinking I would gather new ideas for my classroom and meet other teachers in my new community. It became so much more for I found myself in a supportive atmosphere where we as teachers and administrators talked about and shared our stories of teaching. At first, I did not feel I had much to offer but began to feel very comfortable in this community of women as we talked about living the dilemmas of day-to-day teaching (Dhamborvorn, 1991). We spent many of these gatherings designing thematic unit plans, and sharing our resources and ideas. Our stories of teaching were threads that linked these shared experiences to actual classroom practice.

I visited the classrooms of some of the women and saw how they provided opportunities for their students to explore and learn in exciting, supportive environments. These women were "connected teachers" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 223) and I saw how I had also managed, in some ways, to retell their story in my own teaching through exploring drama and literature. It was through retelling my stories of teaching with these women, and through my ongoing experiences in my classroom, that I experienced, as told by Clandinin and Connelly (in preparation) an awakening, "an ongoing sense of unease" (p. 7). My unease was with my knowing that the prescribed program documents in my classroom were not the curriculum. Our curriculum encompassed so much more.

In this new community, I felt I had the permission and support to tell and live the stories of teaching in new ways. I moved from a segmented to an integrated timetable, and the children became actively involved in decisions about their learning. I talked less and listened more.

As teachers, we found many more opportunities to plan together. For one of our units, the school board provided substitute teachers so that a colleague and I could spend a day planning in our school. We were able to draw on our school resources, and share our unit with the other teachers. This sharing led to an informal planning evening organized by the division one teachers where we shared our ideas for a new unit. Many changes were now being lived out at the school level and I was excited about the community we were becoming.

The assistant superintendent and curriculum consultant continued their support by helping me to evaluate my own teaching as I experienced the process of transformation, a reliving of my stories with changed actions in my teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation). They asked if I would share my experiences in the form of inservices for teachers, both in our division and for teachers in other areas. I wondered what I would possibly have to offer when there were many wonderful teachers who knew much more than I did. I was, however, excited by the possibility of learning through the stories told by other teachers, as well as by sharing the stories of the wonderful teachers with whom I had worked. Shortly thereafter, I was encouraged by my colleagues to apply for the position of assistant principal in a school several miles away. Although I was anxious about the responsibility I felt it entailed, I welcomed the opportunity to work with teachers and children in new ways.

My new community was a kindergarten through grade twelve school of just over three hundred students. Twelve of the twenty-four staff members were new, including the principal and myself. One of our visions was of a more holistic view of teaching and learning. We saw the transitions between kindergarten and grade one, elementary and junior high, and junior high and high school as difficult and disconnected for the students. We spent the year breaking down those divisions by planning whole school activities, by making scheduling changes for more continuous progress, and by implementing teacher initiated changes to cross division lines and teach and coach at different grade levels.

As in years past, I worked with a teacher who was returning to the classroom after having spent several years at home with her children. Although Sharon was nervous about the changes she perceived had taken place in the curriculum, she spoke positively of how growing and learning with her own children had shaped her teaching. In September, she began, as

I had many times, much like a beginning teacher. Her program consisted primarily of texts and workbooks. She told me she felt comfortable in doing so as that was what she was most familiar with from her earlier teaching. As the year progressed, she began to work with another teacher and seemed to feel more comfortable providing opportunities for her students to be more involved in choices about their learning. Through conversations about our teaching, and, her stories of living as a teacher/mother, mother/teacher (Kennedy, 1992), I saw how Sharon could not separate her experiences as a mother from her work as a teacher.

I thoroughly enjoyed my work as an administrator/teacher. However, at the end of that year, Craig was transferred to Edmonton. I considered commuting, for there were many exciting possibilities opening up for the next year. I realized though that my heart would no longer be in the community if my home was so far away. I decided to use our move as an opportunity to return to university.

The view of careers as separated from one's personal life clearly did not fit for Sharon and myself and it was in my return to university that I began to wonder if it fit for other women. Through informal conversations, and in looking back at the stories I lived and saw being lived by other women in teaching, I realized we were not alone. They too had been expected to conform, to have their story fit a "cultural script" (Willard, 1988, p. 227). The difficulty they had in doing so was illuminated by their experiences as mothers (Kennedy, 1992) as they lived with the dilemmas of their ways of knowing as different from the ways that schools are structured. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) spoke to this when they wrote, "the kind of knowledge that is used in child rearing is typical of the kind of knowledge women value and schools do not" (pp. 200, 201).

I also remembered and began to tell the stories I had seen my friends and colleagues live, particularly those told by women with their own children. For example, in one school division where I taught, job sharing was eliminated to supposedly reduce spending. Women were forced to make a choice between full-time teaching as mothers or full-time mothering as teachers.

Throughout my graduate work, I was drawn to the literature on women's careers in teaching, and how the personal and professional are interwoven. I wanted to know how this connection translated into their classroom curriculum. The following is an account of my journey through the literature on women's careers and their experiences as mothers in teaching.

Chapter 3

The Literature

Webster (1979) offers two definitions for the phrase "curriculum vitae". The first, originating in Latin, means the "course of one's life". The second, a more common application of the phrase, is, "a short account of one's career and qualifications prepared typically by an applicant for a position" (p. 277). The latter definition is what we are often asked to submit in the form of a resume, sometimes in two pages or less, when applying for a position. Evetts (1986) describes this as the "objective dimension" of one's career, "the system of clearly defined statuses and offices which is the formal career structure...made up of a series of scaled posts and positions within which teachers' careers are constructed" (p. 227). It is in this way that career stories have traditionally been told.

Biklen (1986) wrote about how the traditional definitions of career emphasize "the coherence of the career and goal orientation of the individual pursuing it"; separate work from family; describe "career commitment" as making the time and energy commitment of worklife a priority over family life (p. 504). This view tends to be based on the experiences and views of male teachers as they are more inclined to see their careers as a series of hierarchical moves away from the classroom and through the various levels of administration (Agnew, 1989; Miller, Taylor, & Walker, 1982).

In earlier studies when women's experiences were included, they were commonly "incorporated into the established framework as an additional variable" (Dex, 1985, p. 91), the framework being the "male-as-norm-assumption" (Acker, 1983, p. 128). When compared with men's careers, women were viewed to lack commitment to their work because of family responsibilities and the likelihood that their careers will be interrupted for having and raising children (Evetts, 1986; Lyons, 1981). Acker (1983) and Gaskell, McLaren, and Novogrodsky (1989) described this as the "deficit model" of women's lives where women are seen as not measuring up to the achievements of men due to their own choices and inadequacies.

The "interruption" of a woman's career to stay at home with her family has not been viewed as a valuable part of one's "career". In an article focusing on career counselling for women, Fitzgerald and Crites (1980) made the following statements:

> We do not consider full-time homemaking to be a career. The term career is reserved for the developmental sequence of full-time gainful employment engaged in by the individual during the course of his or her working life. (p. 45)

LeGuin (1989) wrote of the devaluing of homemaking by saying, "the art of making order where people live is not considered an art, it is not even considered work" (p. 154). Her views are shared by Bateson (1989), and Midgley and Hughes (1983). They wrote of the importance of the labour of caring for others and nurturing human growth that women are continually engaged in and for which they are not recognized. Such labour "because it is unpaid is often not acknowledged as genuinely necessary and valuable work" (Bateson, 1989, p. 100).

Many women try to live the scripts of being part of the so called "paid working world" and of being mothers. Willard (1988) tells us that these cultural scripts are "increasingly, divergent from new realities of the lives of women who mother" (p. 227). It is particularly difficult for women when "these scripts are in conflict with one another or are not tied to the realities of women's lives because supportive social structures have not been developed" (Willard, 1988, p. 227).

Willard goes on to suggest three possible scripts that a woman may try to follow. The first is culturally prescribed, the traditional script, that calls for the role of the "selfless wife and mother" The second is the newer script of 'superwoman'. Many women live this script as they focus on developing their sense of self in the workplace in addition to being the "ideal mother" (1988, p. 227). This newer script may be found in Young's study (1989) of four women in educational administration. She found that in addition to their paid work, these women expected of themselves and "were expected to organize and carry out family work...the direct and delegated care-giving and other domestic responsibilities that, in combination with the paid work, give rise to competing urgencies" (Young, 1992, p. 11).

The third possibility suggested by Willard is "to try to create ways of mothering that respond, not to a script, but to the reality of one's own family and situation. In order to follow this course, a woman must be able to define her 'own terms' in the decision" (1988, pp. 227, 228). Designing "new maps" (Midgley and Hughes, 1983) is difficult when, as Young (1989) tells us, "the design of professional work, even in the field of education where there are so many women, has not adequately accommodated other dimensions and demands of life, especially family and leisure" (p. 221).

Biklen (1986), Evetts (1990), and Feimen-Nemser and Floden (1986), wrote about the inadequacies of the traditional conceptions of careers in terms of the experiences of women teachers. The women elementary school teachers that Biklen (1986) interviewed "described a discontinuous pattern" of employment as they left the classroom to have and raise their children. While many remained out of the profession for extended periods of time, "their internal conceptions of themselves as teachers remained consistent" (p. 506).

For women, commitment to their families does not necessarily indicate a lack of commitment to their work as teachers (Hall cited in

Feimen-Nemser & Floden, 1986). In a study of the careers of teachers of young children, Nias (1981) found that very few women referred to the aspect of "career-continuance" as an indication of commitment to the profession (p. 188). Commitment was most often referred to as one's own professional dedication and the concern and care that one has toward's children.

Many women in teaching leave their positions for a lengthy period of time to raise their families before returning to the classroom (Evetts, 1990). However, the stories of this experience, the day-to-day realities of mothers in teaching returning to the paid working world, are not part of public discourse. As Kennedy (1992) wrote, "mothers who are teachers do tell their stories about what it means to teach and how it is that mothering and teaching come together in their lives. But these stories are told in the private rather than the public domain" (p. 27).

Kennedy's journey of self-discovery as a mother in teaching tells of her return to the classroom after fourteen years at home with her own children. She wrote of the reconstruction of her teaching image, a process lived out within the day to day experiences of her classroom:

> As a mother who was now teaching I knew that my responses to my students were modelled on my responses to my own children and their experiences of schooling. My idea was to make our work in the

classroom more of a collaborative effort. (Kennedy, 1992, p. 65)

Bateson (1990), Bergum (1989), Kennedy (1992), and Ruddick (1989), have written of the experiences of mothers living lives of improvisation, unpredictability and ambiguity. To these writers, growing with and nurturing one's children is a positive expression of development. Willard (1988) tells us that "mothering presents women with an opportunity to experience care of others as self-enhancing" and "need not be seen as opposing choices" (p. 232).

As they respond to and nurture their children, women live change "in a very immediate and day-to-day way" (Miller, 1976, p. 54). Bergum's study (1989) of the lives of women as they become mothers tells us of the tremendous growth and transformation of women's self images. "Many women who have children speak of their own personal, profound, and inmost change. They discover commitments of which they did not know themselves capable" (p. 42) She calls for "a changed understanding of who women are as mothers" (p. 150), one that acknowledges and values the "public reality of women's private lives" (p. 151).

Gilligan (1982) wrote, "the failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation" (p. 173). She posits a "more complex rendition of human experience" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174), one that allows women to tell of their experiences in their own terms:

> Women's descriptions of adulthood convey a different sense of its social reality. In their portrayal of relationships, women replace the bias of men toward separation with a representation of the interdependence of self and other, both in love and in work. By changing the lens of developmental observation from individual achievement to relationships of care, women depict ongoing attachment as the path that leads to maturity. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 170)

Gilligan's vision is shared by Greene (1978) who feels, "an intensified awareness of women's own realities, the shape of their own lived worlds" (p. 27) would foster growth for all. She asks for "the release of individual capacities now suppressed, for the development of free and autonomous personalities" (p. 213).

Bateson's stories tell of "the need for multiple models, so that it is possible to weave something new from many different threads" (1989, p. 16). If we consider Websters (1979) first definition of curriculum vitae, the course of one's life, as a new way of thinking of one's career story, what place then is there for the stories women live as mothers? This research story is a journey to uncover these stories and provide such a place for them to be told.

Chapter 4

Methodology

I thought at the time of composing my research proposal that I was writing of what was to come, a proposal of something I would engage in sometime in the future. In looking back, I see the line is not clearly defined as to when the research began. The research is, instead, a telling, retelling and reliving of stories constructed with and through the three women. It is a process that will continue long after the thesis document is printed. It is only now, through telling our stories, that I begin to construct an understanding of narrative.

Narrative Research

I begin this story of narrative research with Libby's words. She told me of the enlightening experience of reading our conversation transcript and of how it reminded her of her mother's question, "How do you know what I'm thinking until I say it?" Reading our words added a new dimension to her mother's words and Libby asked, "How do I know what I'm thinking until I say it?" (Conversation, May 27, 1992). This, for me, is the essence of narrative.

Grumet (1991) wrote, "our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can" (p. 69). With Libby's words, I extend Grumet's vision to tell of stories as masks through which we may also see ourselves. It has been through narrative that we, the three women and myself, are able to tell of our own lives. Our ongoing conversation is a way of making sense of our stories of teaching and the way teaching is embedded in our lives of multiple commitments.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) wrote "the study of narrative...is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). It is through narrative, the living and telling of stories, that we express how we experience and interpret the world. Helle (1991) tells us that "narrative ways of knowing function collectively to affirm the values of multiplicity and connection...narrative processes function as a connected medium for knowing - an embodiment of an intimate relation between the knower and the known" (pp. 49,50). In constructing a narrative, we "move from accounts of discrete experiences to an account of why and how the life took the shape it did" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989a, p. 4).

Dewey (1938) wrote of the continuity of experience as a "moving force" (p. 38), telling us that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). LeGuin's writing tells of the temporal nature of narrative as "a continual weaving and restructuring of the remembered and the perceived and the imagined" (1989, p. 44). To Clandinin and Connelly (1991), narrative research is a movement back and forth and forward through time, as we both live and tell our stories of living, while moving towards an imagined future.

The research story itself is another layer of experience when, as Borland (1991) tells us, we as researchers give a "physical existence" to our stories through writing about them. In telling the story of a story, "we construct a second-level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first" (p. 63). In other words, "a researcher's narrative account of an educational event may constitute a restorying of that event, and to that extent it is on a continuum with the process of reflective restorying that go on in each of our educational lives" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 259).

Grumet (1988) wrote, "to tell a story is to impose form on experience" (p.87). However, she further explained that "the creative experience is not just about bringing experience to form; it is also about expressing our thoughts and feelings about that experience to someone else and finding out what she thinks about it" (p. 94). It is in this, the experiencing (living), and telling, that there is always the possibility of retelling, as we "awaken to new ways of 'seeing' our world, to different ways of seeing ourselves in relation to each other and to the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, in press, p. 18). Through conversations, we may tell our stories to others, creating possibilities for retelling our stories by also listening to those of others, interwoven with our own. "Conversation as a research method is very likely to yield stories as data. If we want to understand people's understanding, we are apt to discover meaning in their stories" (Florio-Ruane, 1991, p. 240).

Narrative as Collaborative Research

Sharing teaching stories in conversation tells of the collaborative nature of narrative research, for stories as "data" are mutually constructed by all those participating in the process (Noddings, 1986). Young and Tardiff's writing of a research story tells of an evolving relationship of collaboration as they moved from interviewer/interviewee to women on a journey together, constructing and reconstructing stories of their experiences. They wrote of "the joint creation of a narrative, the drawing of one person into the life of another" (1992, p. 137). Shared ownership of the research story is particularly comfortable and natural for women who, as Jenkins (1982) and Minister (1991) tell us, view conversation as a shared construction of meaning. Words overlap, and many layers of dialogue are lived out as one woman begins a sentence that another may finish or speaks while another is telling. Minister (1991) writes of the supportive nature of interruptions in women's conversations, preferring to call this "intersupport" (p. 33), as women's questions and comments encourage further clarification and reflection for all engaged in the conversation.

The collaborative nature of constructing narratives through conversation naturally extends to a second layer, the writing of the text itself (Personal Narratives Group, 1989d). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) wrote, "plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of importance in the revised story" (p. 10). This may be lived out by working with participants while writing or by sharing written stories with the participants to gain further clarification and understanding.

Ethics in Narrative Research

Collaborative construction of stories throughout the research process is the essence of the ethical in narrative. It becomes a sense of caring for the relationship, for mutual understanding and support, in the shared telling. Noddings (1986) wrote of the ethics of research in terms of "fidelity...as faithfulness...to individuals with whom one is in relation" (p. 497) while at the same time continuing to strive for "finer and truer" levels of understanding (p. 496).

Kirby and McKenna (1989) wrote of the importance of being open and honest in sharing with participants the nature of the research, and how they will be involved. Hampsten (1986) specifically addressed ethical dilemmas of narrative form:

> Even after an 'informant' has approved a text, agreed to publication, and written her permission to be quoted, the person may still not truly understand the implications of what she or he has said or written and the 'use' to which it is being put. (p. 130)

The nature of narrative inquiry brings with it a certain ambiguity in that the construction and reconstruction of meaning is shared between all participants, and therefore, emerges as the inquiry unfolds. It is therefore critical to care for our relationships with "the qualities of empathetic regard, full and critical attention, and a discerning gaze" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 6).

Borland (1991), Hampsten (1986), Noddings (1986), and Personal Narratives Group (1989d) caution researchers to carefully consider the question of shared ownership of data, since the stories are mutually constructed. Borland (1991) wrote of "extending the conversation we initiate while collecting oral narratives to the later stage of interpretation" so that we may "more sensitively negotiate issues of interpretive authority in our research" (p. 73).

Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) wrote of how researchers rarely refer to the "aftermath of their work; to the subjects' responses to their efforts as a deliberate part of the research enterprise" (p. 377). As Weber (1986) tells us, conversations linger, are played and re-played in the minds of all participants, and may be lived out in new ways in conversations with others. The nature of the research experience for myself and the women in my study invites a "heightened concern" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 372) on my part as to their well-being as they continue to retell their stories beyond the recording and writing.

Portraits as Narrative Form

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) write about narrative as "a kind of life story, larger and more sweeping than the short stories that compose it" (p. 24). The holistic nature of narrative has provided a way of thinking about women's stories as portrayals of their lives. "Narrative form...speaks to the complexity and importance of the different shapes assumed by personal narratives" and "essentially refers to the structure of the narrative" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989c, p. 99).

The work of Bateson (1989), Greene (1978), Grumet (1988), and Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) has added to a language that compliments and enhances my understanding of women's narratives. Their stories offer a way of talking about the form of my research as "portraits" of women's experiences as teachers and mothers.

Bateson (1989) wrote about composing a life as having a "metaphorical relation" to the visual arts where "a variety of disparate elements may be arranged to form a simultaneous whole" (p. 4). Her stories of the lives of five women tell of "the process of improvisation that goes into composing a life...compounded in the process of remembering a life, like a patchwork quilt in a watercolor painting, rumpled and evocative" (Bateson, 1989, p. 34).

Greene (1978) wrote of absorbing oneself in composing and attending to art:

> To explore a medium, to work with it, to try to express something seen or felt or heard is to come to understand, on some level, the visions that are made real when they are transformed into perceptual realities and given intelligible form. (p. 187)

She sees the artistic/aesthetic experience as a way to engage in a viewing of one's life from an altered position, leading naturally to creating new visions, new possibilities not otherwise visible.

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) extended the metaphor of compositional art to research, as she wrote about portraiture as an emergent form of inquiry that, as with narrative, seeks to "capture the insider's view of what is important" (p. 14). Her use of portraiture is seen as a framework for bringing stories together to tell about experiences holistically, and further explains that "an essential ingredient of creating a portrait is the process of human interaction" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1982, pp. 5, 6). In the process of creating a portrait of experiences, the researcher and participant are involved in a collaborative relationship of storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Portraits emerge as stories captured at a particular interval in one's life. At the same time, they "reflect a compelling paradox, of a moment in time and of timelessness" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 5) as dimensions of past, present, and future are found as we restory and relive our stories in the process of telling. We may awaken to new ways of knowing as we retell the stories in the context of life in the present, and the possibilities for the future (Bateson, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, in press). For example, my portrayal of my career story may appear static in writing, and yet, as I look at the portrait of how I have come to know myself as a teacher, I am re-living the experiences surrounding the stories/images captured. Just as in looking at a piece of art, with each viewing I am looking at the written portrait through different eyes, since new lived stories have added other dimensions, new ways of telling the stories already told. There is life in the portrait, as I retell the stories of the past and discover possibilities for the future. Each reading is a dialogue with the text, keeping it alive and growing. Emily Carr (1966) wrote, "movement is the essence of being. When a thing stands still and says, 'Finished,' then it dies. There isn't such a thing as a completion in this world for that would mean Stop! Painting is a striving to express life" (p. 117). So may it also be said for the telling and writing of stories.

Narrative portraits invite the researcher as storyteller and artist to be aware of "offering shape to the portrait" and, at the same time, "being shaped by the context" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 14). As Benjamin (1968) wrote, storytelling is an "artisan form of communication" where the "traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel" (pp. 91,92). Portraiture "admits the shaping hand of the artist, and is less concerned with anticipated problems of replication" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 14). The understandings and expectations that the researcher brings to the life story are "themselves an essential element in the contextualization of personal narratives" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989b, p. 22).

There is, as Rosen (1986) tells us, significance in which stories we choose to share, as well as in the stories themselves. He asks us to consider why we remember a story and not just what we remember, to discover how a particular story tells of the process of constructing and reconstructing our understanding of our lives. In composing a portrait of a life, one is involved in "a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present, remembering best those events that prefigured what followed, forgetting those that proved to have no meaning within the narrative" (Bateson, 1989, p. 30). It is in this way that the emergence of stories is central to the story of this research.

"The narrative form a writer gives to a life necessarily involves her sense of the purpose for which her or another's story is told and is responsive to her notions of audience" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989c, p. 99). I envisioned portraiture as the form for this research. I wanted to celebrate the uniqueness of the women's experiences, to have their stories stand strong and on their own. Much of the research I had read drew on the connections of experience (Bateson, 1989; Bergum, 1989; Young, 1989). I wanted to capture a sense of the wholeness of their lives, to give the reader the opportunity to really get to know each woman. I wanted readers/viewers of our portraits to at first make their own connections, to tell their own stories from our portraits, without myself, the researcher/artist, hovering over them.

Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) wrote about the emergence of these connections through the process of writing:

> The portraitist rapidly selects themes that emerge as central to the landscape and vigorously pursues those themes in an attempt to establish their prevalence and centrality. The pace is accelerated, choices are quickly made about the avenues to pursue, and much left

> out-either unnoticed or unrecorded, or consciously excluded. (p. 14)

For the participant, these threads may not be easily uncovered by herself. It is in this way that portraits look back at us and tell us things about ourselves that we did not realize before (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983).

While a portrait of a woman's life stands somewhat alone as a depiction of the uniqueness of her experience, in looking at the portraits, one may see shared threads of experience, "thematic moments" (Bergum, 1989, p. 13) both within and between lives. These "overlapping moments" (Bergum, 1989, p. 13) provide threads of connection, other paths along which we may journey to make sense of our own lives.

I envisioned the possibilities for narrative portraits when I read the following by Grumet (1988):

> It is the function of art to reorganize experience so it is perceived freshly. At the very least, the painting, the poem, or the play cleanses a familiar scene, washing away the film of habit and dust collected over time so that it is seen anew. When it is most radical, the work of art draws the viewer to it, engaging expectations, memories, recognitions, and simultaneously interrupts the viewer's customary response, contradicting expectations with new possibilities, violating memories, displacing recognition with estrangement. (p. 81)

Chapter 5

A Portrait Of Research

My research story is a portrait in and of itself, a working and re-working, a process of composition. I lived the life of a struggling artist, with my best work emerging from painful as well as enriching moments.

The story of my research has no beginning, nor does it have an end. Instead, it reaches back through my mothers and forward to my children. I share this story for others engaged in research for it has been in reading the stories of others that I have found comfort and direction in my own work.

The stories of my research as mosaics may be seen as the "crystallizations" of an artist/writer (Craig, 1984, p. 331). These are the turning points in my journey of writing, the "awakenings" (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation) that tell of new levels of awareness.

A Story of an Interview

As a graduate student, I was asked by a course instructor to participate in a pilot research project. I felt very comfortable with the woman who had asked me and looked forward to sharing my story. I was unsure of what to expect though, having never participated in a formal research project before.

I talked a lot while she asked the questions. Her only responses were more questions and the occasional nod or laugh. I later realized I had felt uncomfortable with the process. I felt she was being as careful as she could not to respond to my answers, to stay out of my story so that only my voice would be heard. While I appreciated her concern for not wanting to influence my answers, I realized I would not be engaging in research in the same way. I wanted her to respond, to share in my stories, to tell me her's. Her stories would be a way of affirming how I made sense of teaching, or perhaps could draw out new ways of seeing my experiences, expanding on them for more deeper reflection.

She gave my words back to me in the form of a transcript and I felt uncomfortable reading them. I did not feel I had expressed myself very clearly, and seemed to be talking in circles. At the same time, I felt exposed, seeing my words in black on white. I felt I wanted to do the interview again and became concerned with the nature of the stories I had shared. Had I told stories I should not have? How would they be used? Would others read them and recognize themselves?

Although I was anxious, the nature of our relationship meant that I had complete faith in the decisions the researcher would make in using my words. She was open and honest about her work, and through our experiences in the class, I knew I was working with a caring, thoughtful woman. Following my reading of the transcript, she reassured me that my story would only be shared in an assignment for her research class, and I felt better about having participated.

This story raised many concerns for me as I anticipated engaging in my own research. I was awakened to, as described by Eisner (1991), the tensions, controversies, and dilemmas that are lived as we engage in research with others. I was grateful for the experience for I then had a much clearer sense of what my research would entail and, more importantly, a new appreciation of what the women in my study would be experiencing.

I knew, as described by Jenkins (1982), Oakley (1981), and Weber (1986), that the research interviews would be conversations. My story woven with theirs would draw out different elements, shades, and colors, "dimensions of meaning" not easily uncovered by the participants themselves (Bergum, 1989, p. 13).

The issue of ethics became a much more complex issue than assuring anonymity and providing opportunities for them to omit data from their transcripts. There would be risk in their sharing, and I knew I would share in that risk with my stories. I began to see my responsibility as a researcher at two junctions encompassing the research journey. The first was to provide a safe, supportive space within which the women and I could share our stories. This supportive space would be a physical as well as emotional space. The second junction would be in transcribing, writing and publishing the stories. I had a new understanding of what the women may be living as they read their words. I would be particularly careful to continue the conversation as they experienced reading their words. For my research story, the women would have the final word in what would become the printed document of their story.

I realized that the thread of trust that had connected me with my course instructor became the bond through which we negotiated the dilemmas of sharing and writing my stories. This thread would be lived out in my own research story through the connections I made with my participants. Although I had not met Libby and Margie prior to this research story, I had a connection with each of them, a connection through other women we both admired and respected. Our connectors helped to begin the weaving of relationship. At the same time however, I knew that these other women were part of the story, and my sensitivity to these triangles of friendship was heightened. They had trusted me with names of women they were close to and I lived the research story holding the relationships like delicate crystals. This fragility became apparent when I met the women whose lives are told in this research for the first time. Each shared her stories openly and honestly with me, a person she had never met.

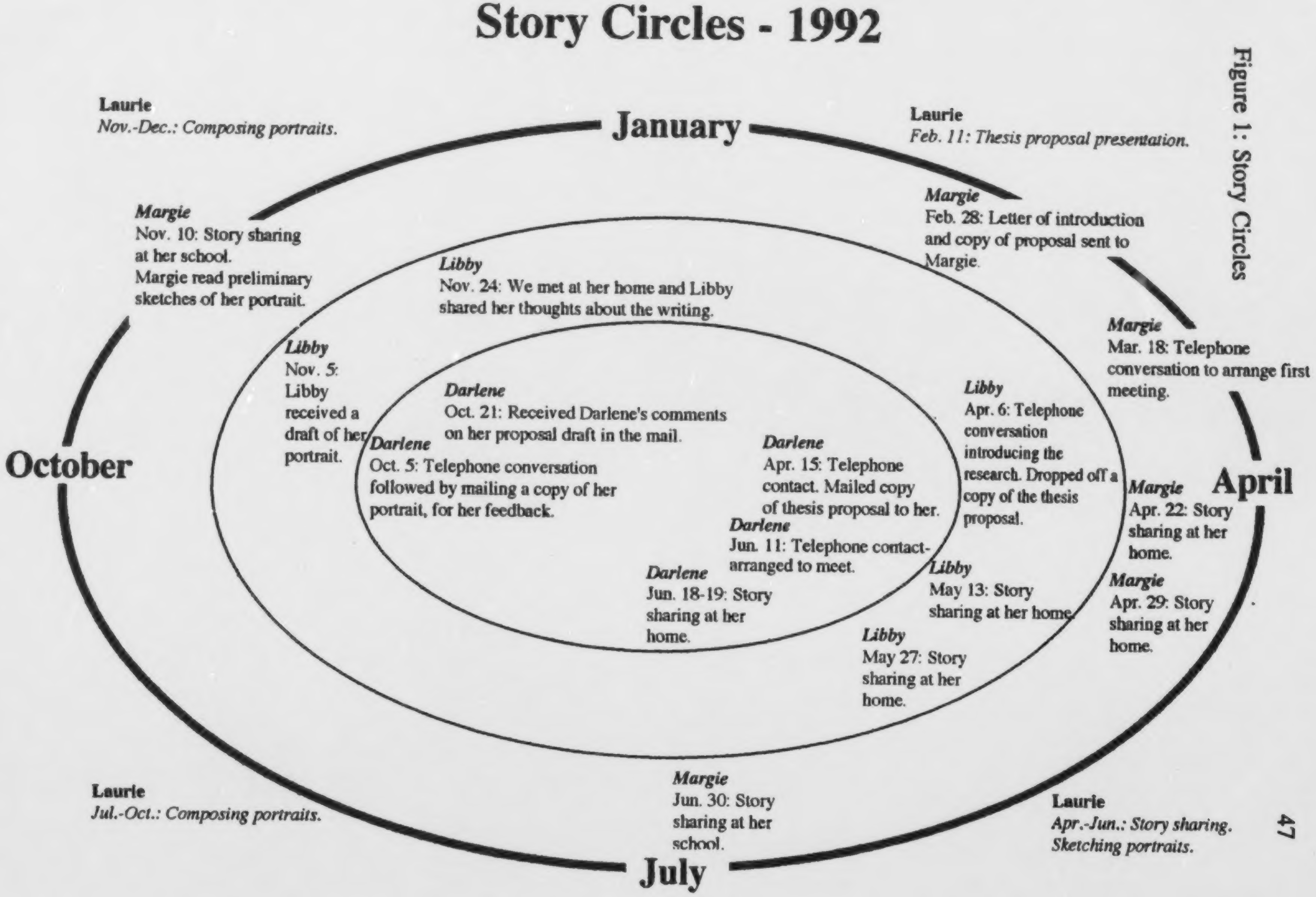
Circles of Stories

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us that a chronicle, or "narrative sketch" (p. 11), of the inquiry is important for the context, giving the reader a sense of the wholeness of the story. I share this as Story Circles, ways to capture the moments as chapters of the research story (Figure 1).

The circles encompass a broad geographical range. One woman is teaching in a large city while another is in a city connected to a major center. The third woman is living and teaching in a town of eight thousand people located several miles from the nearest city. There are eight children in this study, five girls and three boys, ranging in ages from seven to twenty. There is a chronological diversity between families. One is a family of elementary school aged children, the second is a family of teenagers, and the third is a combination of high school and college students. At the time of this research, all three women held part-time positions. One returned to full time teaching in the fall of 1992.

The Story Circles are drawn as pictures of the research. They are a way to show the many layers of relationship woven through the research journey.

Figure 1: Story Circles



Story Circles - 1992
January
April
July
October
Laurie
Nov.-Dec.: Composing portraits.
Laurie
Feb. 11: Thesis proposal presentation.
Margie
Feb. 28: Letter of introduction and copy of proposal sent to Margie.
Margie
Mar. 18: Telephone conversation to arrange first meeting.
Margie
Apr. 22: Story sharing at her home.
Margie
Apr. 29: Story sharing at her home.
Laurie
Apr.-Jun.: Story sharing. Sketching portraits.
Margie
Jun. 30: Story sharing at her school.
Laurie
Jul.-Oct.: Composing portraits.
Margie
Nov. 10: Story sharing at her school.
Margie read preliminary sketches of her portrait.
Libby
Nov. 24: We met at her home and Libby shared her thoughts about the writing.
Libby
Nov. 5: Libby received a draft of her portrait.
Libby
Apr. 6: Telephone conversation introducing the research. Dropped off a copy of the thesis proposal.
Libby
May 13: Story sharing at her home.
Libby
May 27: Story sharing at her home.
Darlene
Oct. 21: Received Darlene's comments on her proposal draft in the mail.
Darlene
Oct. 5: Telephone conversation followed by mailing a copy of her portrait, for her feedback.
Darlene
Apr. 15: Telephone contact. Mailed copy of thesis proposal to her.
Darlene
Jun. 11: Telephone contact-arranged to meet.
Darlene
Jun. 18-19: Story sharing at her home.

Conversations

Minister (1991) stated that the purpose of the initial meeting "is not just a preliminary interview to obtain data; the meeting is an opportunity to promote collegiality and to engage in mutual self disclosure. For feminist researchers, questions flow both ways" (p. 36). In my first contact with each of the women, I planned to introduce myself, tell them a little bit about my research, and leave a copy of my proposal for them to read. Since I had already briefly explained what my research entailed when I telephoned each woman, they anticipated how they saw themselves involved and were interested in hearing more.

With Libby, I began our first get-together by explaining how I had come to write my proposal and how I envisioned her participation in this research story. Libby had read my proposal and began our conversation by sharing her perceptions about my expectations. She had a sense that I was looking for something in particular or for a particular experience. At the outset, she began by sharing her feelings about my proposal by saying, "I have a feeling I may say something that you hadn't expected, which I think is interesting. I don't quite fit in, I don't think, with the women that you described" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). I wondered what I had said or written that had given her the impression that I was looking for a particular experience. I was intrigued with her story of seeing herself differently from the women in my proposal.

Darlene did not consider herself unusual, and shared with me her wonder at what she would have to offer to the study. I had taught with her for a couple of years and remembered her work as a mother in teaching. I knew her stories would be insightful and would tell of the wonderful work she engaged in both with her own children and her students at school.

Meeting Margie was an adventure since she lived a plane flight and ferry ride away. The adventure continued to be lived in the journey of our sharing. We moved a lot and I soon saw how this movement paralleled the ebb and flow of Margie's life.

The data gathering, that is, hearing the stories of each woman's life, began at that first meeting as we talked about the research. It was a "mutual self-disclosure" (Minister, 1991, p. 36) and, although I was nervous at each of these initial gatherings, I quickly felt at ease as we shared tea and spoke about the thread that connected us: teaching. Rather than a time of questions and answers, I felt the conversations allowed for the emergence of what they valued.

Similar to Lawrence Lightfoot's writing (1983), I did not begin with "preconceived notions of key themes or a specific list of predetermined questions" (p. 14). I did, however, feel it necessary to begin with a context, a framework for capturing the lives of the women. I thought I would begin by asking them to give an account of their teaching, a sketch of when, what, and where they had taught, that is, to construct a traditional curriculum vitae.

However, in my initial conversations with Libby and Margie, I did not ask the question. True to portraiture, they shared their lives "from the inside out" (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, p. 7). Our initial greetings, "how are you", and "what's happened since we talked" lead easily into conversations about their lives and their teaching. Their worlds opened up to me as they told me stories about their lives as teachers. Later I probed for a career frame and, as I did, more stories emerged as they talked of growing up, their early teaching, and their families.

Darlene brought her career frame to our first conversation. This is a chronological list she keeps to track her experiences in teaching, for as she told me, her career story has become quite complicated. Her career frame became the context for the stories of her early teaching.

Technology in Research

I did not get a sense that the research began at a particular point and, as a result, was either unsure of, or uncomfortable with, turning the tape recorder on. To stop and do so, I felt, would interrupt the flow and the tone of our conversations.

My unease with the recorder was one I wrestled with throughout the research journey. Paralleling my research story were my experiences in working with technology as a graduate assistant transcribing the research conversations of others. I also remembered my unease when I was recorded for research. How natural would our conversations be with the recorder sitting there, whirling to remind us of its presence? Could we tell our private stories, knowing they would be captured permanently on tape?

While transcribing, I was left with a sense that so much was missing once it was typed. Weber (1986) wrote, "writing down verbatim someone's oral language transforms that language, robbing it at times of its power, clarity, and depth, even its meaning" (p. 71). The pauses, laughs, intonation, and body language nested within our conversations told much about the women. Because of my concerns, and for ethical considerations, I transcribed my own tapes. I enjoyed doing so for I slowly relived the conversations. Many connections surfaced as I transcribed and it was through that process that the data analysis (portrait sketching) emerged.

I shared my technophobia with Margie for she was the first woman I met. This was the first time I confronted my unease. Margie responded by saying that it is really our perceptions that are our truths. I realized then that my writing would be my perceptions of how we are seeing our lives as women and teachers. As Grumet (1988) wrote "our work, no matter what its form, is not the seeing itself but a picture of the seeing" (p. 61). For me, Margie's words were enriched when I read Greene (1978) who wrote, "perceptual reality ought always to be considered one of the multiple realities available to us: a recognizable set of experiences, once they are reflected back upon, characterized by a distinctive mode of attention, one too many people have repressed or refused" (p. 216).

Following my first conversation with Margie, I felt comfortable in the detail of my notes for I had not turned on the tape recorder. I was able to reconstruct our conversations to my satisfaction. From Margie's early response to her portrait, she seemed satisfied as well. I used the recorder for some of our time together and, through those transcriptions, I felt comfortable that her voice would be heard in my writing. With the other two women, I reluctantly turned the recorder on. I worked from the transcriptions of our conversations as well as from my journal entries made immediately following our meetings. I was much more conscious of the recorder than they were. I have not resolved my unease with it. I did not however, have a fear of the machine not working since I felt comfortable knowing I could capture the essence of the conversations with my own notes. Only once, early in our sharing, did I write while we were talking. I left my paper and pen alone for the rest of our times together. Again, my unease was with taking the sacred and private and turning it into the public. I wanted to enjoy the spontaneity of conversation.

As well as using the transcripts and my journal entries for portrait writing, I found myself returning often to the tapes themselves as a way of recapturing the tone of the conversations. The stories came alive again and I had a better sense of who the women were as I "painted the pictures" of their lives. My writing was more connected when I heard their voices again for I could picture the women in their life spaces.

Working with the tapes and transcriptions also allowed me to listen to myself, the questions I asked, my responses and probes. I remembered Anderson and Jack's advice:

> We need to refine our methods for probing more deeply by listening to the levels on which the narrator responds to the original questions. To do so we need to listen critically to our interviews, to our responses as well as to our questions. We need to hear what women implied, suggested, and started to say but didn't...We need to consider carefully whether our interviews create a context in which women feel comfortable exploring the subjective feelings that give meaning to actions, things, and events...and whether they encourage women to explain what they mean in their own terms. (1991, p. 17)

As I listened to our conversations, I sometimes found my responses to be entirely inadequate to the wonderfully insightful stories they were telling. However, I loved hearing our stories again for, at times, the voices were blended and overlapping. I heard how our relationships were growing as we shared our stories of teaching. I hoped I was becoming a better listener and, from this experience, all of us better tellers.

I felt comfortable that I was capturing a sense of their lives through our conversations when I heard Libby talk about the experience of reading her transcript. She described it as "unsettling" (Conversation, May 27, 1992) but further explained that she was pleased with the transcript. She felt her stories reflected what she believed, so much so, that she planned to share them with her children, to give them a sense of her work as a mother in teaching.

Stories of Writing

From my early graduate coursework through to my thesis, I had to talk about my writing. I had to tell the story as I wrote it. Storying my experiences in oral ways helped me make sense of what I was reading and living. I talked with my fellow students, my family, and, most importantly, Craig. He, in particular, walked with me through this journey, bringing other dimensions of meaning that I, at times, could not see. I told my stories and read my writing out loud to him. Through his listening and responding, I was able to dig deeper and uncover threads not easily seen.

My talking told of my confusion or of my connections. In talking with others, I was asking, what do you see and hear in my words? How are my stories connecting with yours? I gained tremendous insight into teaching and learning through their responses. I lived Libby's understanding of narrative in that I had to tell my stories to sort out my thinking.

It was because of this telling that I found myself needing the support and space of a community of story tellers, people who created a safe place for me to take risks and who valued my stories. I moved from an office where I was isolated and alone to a noisy, active space where conversations and celebrations of learning take place. I can clearly remember incidents that were critical moments of awareness, a sudden opening of the sky where everything at that moment came together and made sense to me. These were always in the company of others who were wonderful listeners and tellers, and whose insights cultivated the seeds for these moments of growth. I remember arriving at University in the morning, thinking I would never make sense of a particular research dilemma and leaving at the end of the day suddenly renewed and invigorated. I could not have done it without this large community and our "kitchen table" talks (Sewall, 1992, p. 7). Only then could my best writing emerge.

While writing, I followed the advice of Dillard (1989) whose stories tell of the author's life:

> One of the things I know about writing is this: spend it all, shoot it,

> play it, lose it, all, right away, every time. Do not hoard what seems good for a later place in the book, or for another book; give it, give it all, give it now. The impulse to save something good for a better place later is the signal to spend it now. Something more will arise for later, something better. These things fill from behind, from beneath, like well water. Similarly, the impulse to keep to yourself what you have learned is not only shameful, it is destructive. Anything you do not give freely and abundantly becomes lost to you. You open your safe and find ashes. (p. 79)

I learned this lesson the hard way, as I tried to save stories to tell later, only to find they were not as I had told them earlier. The writing came in fits and starts, like a waterfall one moment and a dried up well the next. I had to be prepared for the waterfall for if I missed capturing it while it flowed, I could not regain the intensity later. I carried my journal wherever I went, even leaving it on my nightable when I went to bed. The most important writing for my proposal happened on the bus on my way home, cultivated by an enlightening conversation with one of my research colleagues.

Painting Portraits

I was anxious about writing my thesis for it had taken so long to get to that point. What would a portrait look like? Was I in over my head with my methodology? My portraits would not look like the ones in Lawrence Lightfoot's work. When I began to write, however, I realized so much of it was already there. The portraits literally painted themselves, from the context of our relationships and conversations, the women's settings and their families. Each woman's portrait had a life of its own, each unique.

The overall writing of the research was like no other writing I had done. For the first time, I felt in control of the brush, the paint, the colours. But with that feeling of empowerment came a tremendous responsibility to the women whose lives I captured. I had never felt as anxious about my work. As Dillard (1989) tells us, "at its best, the sensation of writing is that of any unmerited grace. It is handed to you, but only if you look for it. You search, you break your heart, your back, your brain, and then--and only then--it is handed to you" (p. 75). I lived all of these, for the writing of a life is as complex as the living of a life. I knew the ultimate judges of the work would, and should be, the women. It had to be my best.

Fits and Starts

In the midst of my research story, Craig and I bought a business and moved to Victoria. My research writing travelled back and forth several times from March, 1992 to December, 1992. Not only was I trying to fit into the schedules of the women, I was having to work out my own travel schedule along with finishing various commitments at the University. I sat at four different tables, moving back and forth between provinces eight times during those months. I became tired and frustrated. I felt scattered about as my books and files moved from house to house. I narrowed my writing bag down to my computer, my top ten books (starred in the bibliography), and the three files of the women's stories.

As I was leaving Libby's home following one of our conversations, the topic of my move came up and I shared my anxieties with her. She reassured me that there would be connections, for she could always see the connections in her own life. I realized I would perhaps have to look a little harder for the continuity I felt was missing. I went back to Bateson (1989) who reminded me that sometimes continuities are only visible in hindsight.

I finally found a little corner in Nan's home where I lived the last four months with most of my files and books. It was there where I finished the portraits. Nan again looked after me. She had supper ready after long days at the University, and made strong pots of coffee for long nights of writing.

Early in the summer, I had a particularly frustrating time when, for several days, I sat down to the beginning portrait sketches and found myself staring blankly at the screen. I did not like what I had written and felt I had nowhere to go. The words were not there. It was at that time that I found

Emily Carr's journal while browsing through the Victoria Public Library. I gave up writing for a time and read her life. Not knowing her work, I became engrossed in her writing, her thoughts about her work, and the creative process. I happened upon the following:

> The trouble with our painting lies largely with our trying to impose our ideas and our technique on the picture instead of allowing our subject to *impose itself on us*, asserting ourselves instead of making ourselves a blank and letting the subject express on that blank that which it will. (Carr, 1966, p. 233)

I realized I had been wallowing around in what I thought I should be saying rather than what Libby, Darlene, and Margie were telling me. I heard Carr telling me to value and follow my intuition from what I had lived with these women, to reach inside and allow creative energy to direct the process. Progoff (1975) calls an intuitive way of knowing the "inner wisdom of our deep human nature" (p. 272), and I needed to trust that wisdom. From Dillard's account of the creative process of writing/painting, I found the permission I needed:

> Many aspects of the work are still uncertain, of course; you know that. You know that if you proceed, you will change things and learn things, that the form will grow under your hands and develop new and richer lights. But that change will not alter the vision or its deep

> structures; it will only enrich it. You know that and you are right. (1989, p. 56)

Jean advised me to put my transcripts and books away and to write about each women. I wrote from within, drawing on the images painted from our experiences together. These stories became the frame for their portraits.

I went back to Libby's words and only her words. Her stories filled in the frame I had written. I worked and reworked the portrait, learning to let go of some of my writing on the way, but knowing that those pieces were the threads I would build on for later writing. I read my own experiences in Dillard's work (1989) when she wrote, "in those early pages and chapters anyone may find bold leaps to nowhere, read the brave beginnings of dropped themes, hear a tone since abandoned, discover blind alleys, track red herrings, and laboriously learn a setting now false" (p. 6). My early sketches tell of the complexities of composing lives. At times, I found it helped to walk away and come back again for, at a distance, I could see more clearly the paths to take.

Teaching/Researching

During the later stages of writing I collaboratively taught an undergraduate course entitled "Reflective Practice" to third year education students. My initial concern was the time demand of the teaching and how much of my writing I would have to temporarily put aside. For several weeks I did put it aside, partially because of the time commitment to teaching the course but also because I had again reached what felt like an impasse in the writing. I seemed to spend hours trying to write a few sentences, only to erase them the next time I sat down.

My teaching partner and I decided to include portfolios as part of the course evaluation. We scheduled a half hour meeting with each of the 62 students in order to engage in conversations about their career paths and experiences. Following our first few meetings, I realized the students' stories were becoming part of my thesis story. Many came to the meeting telling us they did not think they had anything to start with that would apply to their future work as teachers.

Following each conversation, I marvelled at the richness of their experiences with children, both in formal and informal contexts. The stories they told, some as mothers of their own families, spoke of changes in their knowing of children and learning, adding rich textures to their already multi-layered stories. I wondered of them as I did of the women in my thesis story: how would these stories so important to their lives as teacher/learners be valued when they began searching for positions as teachers? How could they show these in a way that celebrated their growth as teachers?

My own work had the renewal it needed, for I now saw many connections between their stories and the stories of my research, ones I knew I would be exploring long past this thesis research.

Settings

The women decided where to meet. I met Libby in her home as we shared tea in her living room. Darlene and I enjoyed the spring weather in her backyard and later met in her living room. With Margie, we moved around a great deal: at her home, walking to school, driving to ballet, and, for our last two times together, spending time in her school, her other "home".

When I left each gathering I wrote as soon as I could, in as comfortable a space as I could find. There was such a feeling of exhilaration following our times together and I needed to capture that energy. Once I found a picnic table overlooking an inlet. Another time I wrote in my car. My favorite place was on the ferry ride home from Margie's where I could write outside on the ferry deck while the ferry wove through the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. The beginning paragraphs of her portrait are taken, nearly word for word, from my journal entries on one of those trips.

Even though the women had never met, their stories are, in a sense, written collaboratively for in meeting with the women and in writing their stories, they were all there at once in my mind. Stories one woman told triggered connections as I spoke with, and wrote about, the others. Following a conversation with one, I would go to the next woman's home with a different way of seeing. This would be lived out in our new conversations, through my questions and discoveries woven with theirs. I lived moments of awareness, "crystallizations" (Craig, 1984, p. 331), sudden moments of knowing and understanding about one woman's life while I was writing another's. The stories were layered. On the computer, I kept each file open because while I was painting the portrait of one, I found myself frequently going to the pictures of the others with new visions, perceptions of their lives that had shifted.

Portrait Sittings

Each woman's portrait emerged as a reflection of the stories she shared. Libby's story of her interview with the principal who hired her when she returned to the classroom was one that stood out immediately. It told much about who she is and how she lived her return to teaching. It was a beautiful frame for telling the stories of her life. Her portrait as "mosaics" of stories emerged from my early sketches of this story.

Because of the distance to Darlene's home, I spent two consecutive days with her. Some of our talking was not recorded. I spent the evening working in a motel room, retelling and transcribing taped stories. Darlene's portrait frame emerged from many of the stories told while the recorder was turned off. She spoke of how she sees herself as the maintainer of her family and told stories of how she lives that out. While composing her portrait, I returned to the literature that told of women's stories of maintaining as caretaking, finding these as threads to strengthen Darlene's telling of her life. When I asked Darlene what she would include in a portfolio, she immediately talked about how she saw herself as an ambitious, creative, and organized person. I knew at that moment that these would also frame her portrait.

Margie's portrait is painted with her children. The first time we met, she told of how her children are her story of living as a mother in teaching. They were always there with us, if not physically then spiritually. Their stories were all around us in Margie's voice, in her hands, and in her laughter.

Each woman read and responded to her own portrait and I was nervous as I handed my work over. Had I been true to their lives and stories? I was less anxious about their rejections of the portraits for my sake as I was for the community that their stories would be shared in. I wanted the world to hear their stories because they had taught me so much.

Darlene returned her story through the mail with a few clarifications of her own words. She was pleased with the writing but responded that I had made her appear to be a superwoman. I knew then that I had captured Darlene the way that I had wanted. She had always amazed me.

Libby and I went over her portrait together, after she had read and responded on her own. She clarified some dates and we made some minor changes to either soften or highlight a particular story.

I shared Margie's story as a work in progress. She read her portrait in its beginning stages, and I sent a final portrait to her in January. Margie's response continues to be a work in progress. After clarifying the years of her full-time and part-time work, she talked about her story of participating in this research. She would like to respond in writing to her portrait as a way of telling of the power of story. Following our conversation, I had a sense that her participation in this story sharing would become another thread to be woven into her work as a mother in teaching.

I now invite you to walk through our gallery, to meet three brilliant women whose lives tell of the many possibilities for living as mothers in teaching.

Chapter 6

Darlene

Maintainer As Caretaker

A Framework

It was appropriate that Darlene and I should get together in springtime. I have known her for a few years now and always think of spring when I see her. She is youthful and energetic but in a quiet, steady way. She carries the look of her Scandinavian heritage with her fair hair and fine, athletic features. She has a softness about her, and yet I always had the sense that when Darlene felt strongly about something, she was very capable of holding her own. I have seen her in positions where she felt uncomfortable about decisions made regarding her students. She stood firmly and calmly, not willing to compromise what she thought was best for the child.

At the time of our meeting for this research, Darlene was completing a year of half-time teaching, job sharing a classroom with another teacher. I needed to stay overnight because of the distance to Darlene's home so we arranged to meet for two afternoons, fitting our time between her report cards, grocery shopping, a wedding shower at her home, "you're expected to do those things because you aren't working full time" (Conversation, June 18, 1992), helping her son with his school projects, and a golf tournament.

On the first day, I had the pleasure of sharing supper with Darlene and her two teenaged children in their home. Her son's art was spread out on the table, ready to be handed in as an end of the year project. We prepared the meal together: Darlene mixing a sauce, Laura and I making the salad, Michael looking after the barbecue. The children ate quickly and were off to their various commitments. While supper was cooking, Darlene and I shared our talking time in her sunny backyard. There were no fences between the yards that backed onto a small forest. In the background were the sounds of birds chirping, the wind rustling the trees, and children playing in a yard near-by.

In anticipation of our conversation, Darlene brought along a copy of a timeline that she keeps to track her teaching experience as well as the time she has been away from the classroom. She keeps one at home and one at school, adding pieces with each new experience. After she shared it with me, I realized how important it was for her to write it down. Over her seventeen years in the profession, she has moved several times for her husband's job, returned to University, stayed at home full-time to be with her children, changed grades, substituted, and taught half-time. Like the women in Young's study (1989) and Acker's research (1992) on women in teaching, she has lived with changes and unpredictability, shaping a career that is complex and multi-dimensional. Her timeline is a way of making her work visible, a public record that highlights the work she so values, work that could easily be invisible.

In the two days I spent with Darlene, I appreciated the way she told stories to tell of her life as a mother in teaching. Woven through her stories is a sense of knowing herself well, threads of continuity that tell of her as a mother and a teacher from the time she began teaching in the mid 1960's to her life now with her two teenaged children. These threads, drawn from her own words, are the form for Darlene's portrait. They emerged from her description of what she would tell in a portfolio of her life. Together they act as a frame for her stories of returning to the classroom. They speak of who Darlene is, and who she has always been. It has been through having her own children however, that they are featured in a new light, more firmly engraved and intensified.

Maintaining as Caretaking

During my time in their home, I sensed a strong bond between Darlene and her children, one that has grown through Darlene's dedication to her family. She calls herself "the maintainer", the person who takes care of the day to day needs of her family.

Grumet (1988) writes, "women's work is seen as maintenance, repeated in daily chores required merely to sustain life, not to change it" (p. 24). Maintaining a home has been viewed as trivial and laborious and, as such, has not been valued. As Bateson (1989) tells us, "women take up the slack, making the need invisible as we step in to fill it" (p. 140).

Bateson proposes that we look at maintaining differently and emphasizes the value of such work when she writes:

> There is real work involved in housekeeping, in providing food and shelter, but even if we learn to minimize the mechanics of these jobs, the tasks of homemaking cannot be eliminated for their value goes beyond the mechanical. We enact and strengthen our relationships by performing dozens of small practical rituals, setting the table, making coffee, raking the lawn. (p. 123)

For Darlene, her work as a maintainer goes far beyond sustenance, for her day-to-day work in her home is a form of caretaking, creating a space where growth is cultivated and encouraged.

The word "maintainer" from the latin *manutenere*, "to hold in one's hand", means "to sustain life by nourishment...to furnish with means of subsistence or necessaries of life, to back up, stand, give one's support to...one who provides with the requisites of life" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989b, pp. 224,225). Ruddick (1989) writes of this as "maternal work" where "mothers extend their care to the homes they maintain, purchasing, borrowing, maintaining tools, cleaning and harmonizing a space" (p. 80). For Darlene, preparing supper is more than just stirring a sauce and setting the table. It is having a nourishing meal ready at the end of a busy day, prepared on a strict timetable so the children may continue on with the commitments that are important to them. It is a time together when they touch base, talking about school, their friends, and their various interests. It is in this way that Darlene remains closely connected with her children's lives, subtly guiding them as they make decisions, taking care of them as they venture out on their own. As Gilligan (1982) tells us, "the ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining a web of connection so that no one is left alone" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 62). It is through her work as a maintainer that Darlene weaves these threads of connection, laying the groundwork for her children as they begin to tell their own stories as young adults.

While Darlene and I were sharing our stories, Laura came rushing into the room, muddy and wet from her bike ride. Could her mom quickly hose her down so she could be at the ball diamond for her evening game? We laughed and I turned off the recorder while Darlene headed for the backyard. I was reminded of how critical such care has been in my life, as Nan would have my uniform pressed and supper ready when, as a teenager, I hurried home from University classes to dress for my evening part time job at a grocery store. Supper was "made with love" as she nourished me with support to help me through school. Like Nan's work with me, Darlene's work as a maintainer is a way of nurturing her children's growth, nourishing them as they gradually take responsibility for their own decisions.

Darlene values her work as a maintainer when she tells of how she feels dedicated to her children, work that she takes very seriously. At the same time, she lives with the knowledge that society, and in many cases her profession, does not value such work. She tells of a colleague, a woman with two small children, who applied for a sabbatical and was not chosen as a recipient:

> Part of the reason was because she hadn't shown any interest maybe into going on to University...So last summer she went to (an out of province University), she took her two kids and she applied for the sabbatical again this year. (Another teacher) applied for it and he got it, she didn't. The reason he got it was because he is more committed, he's on more committees...she cannot do that because she has a family at home...he has his wife doing that for him so he can just take off. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

To Darlene, the tremendous energy and dedication required for her colleague to attend University in a different province while caring for two young children was overlooked. As she explained, "it was based on the fact that he did have a lot more freedom than what she had because she was a mother with children and responsibilities" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). Her colleague's work as a maintainer for her family was invisible and as such, not valued.

For Darlene and many other women, the maintaining of their homes is a form of caretaking also found in the rituals of their classrooms, the day-to-day maintenance of a physical and emotional space for students to grow and learn in (Grumet, 1988). Several years ago, I visited Darlene's classroom and in looking back to recollect the story, I can now see how her sense of "maternal work" is lived out in her classroom. I remember an active, busy place with comfortable spaces for children to read, explore nature, get their hands wet, and rest. It had the look of the busy homes of many women with pre-schoolers I have visited, filled with children's expressions of their growth in the form of drawings, writing, murals, and sculptures. It was inviting and warm, a place where the individuality of each child is honored. At the same time, I felt a sense of organization, a plan that keeps learning safe and productive, a net of care that invisibly encircled the room, keeping things together and moving.

Darlene spoke of the ability to organize as one of her strengths and, having taught with her, I saw how her organization and dedication as a mother is also lived out in her classroom. To her, maintaining a classroom means spending time on weekends and evenings ensuring that her plans and the classroom space are ready for the children. It also means maintaining connections with parents, some on a very regular basis, in order to provide the best education possible for the children. She tells of a parent she telephoned every day, a connection she felt was necessary as part of the child's growth, another relationship she was maintaining.

Maintaining is a demanding, on-going responsibility and it was when Darlene returned to teaching full-time following six years at home with her own children that she felt overwhelmed with the needs of her family and her dedication to her classroom, both considered full-time work. As Bateson (1989) tells us, "home is a workplace, often for a second or third shift in a single day. It is still immensely difficult for a woman with a family to make the moment of walking through the front door a moment of release" (p. 123). For Darlene, it is impossible not to live a tremendous sense of dedication to the day-to-day needs of her family and yet, as she explains, "I would not like to be a person that was totally dependent on my husband. I want to have my own money and have my own career and be in that type of position. I'd rather be working" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). Her work as a teacher is a way of taking care of herself which, as Bateson (1989) tells us, "is intimately tied to self esteem" (p. 145). Taking care of others and of oneself, however, "always involves commitment and always has a time dimension" (Bateson, 1989, p. 152). It is in her commitment to the combined and demanding work of maintainer/caretaker for her family, for her own needs, and for her children in her classroom, that her stories of leaving and returning to the paid teaching profession are lived out.

Mothering and Teaching

Darlene told of her time at home:

> I was glad I could stay home. I sort of had the feeling I wanted to raise my children but I also felt that I wanted more than that...I wanted to be working, I wanted to be at a different level. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

While she enjoyed the time with her children, she also felt that the longer she was at home, the more she lost confidence in her abilities as a teacher. Her work as a teacher faded into the background as she shifted her focus to her children.

When her youngest child was in kindergarten, she returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher:

> When I went back subbing, it was good for me. I think that's a really neat thing to do because...you sort of realize that you still have what it takes, you know that it's not something that you just lose really. (Conversation, June 19, 1992)

She decided to go back full time the next year and found herself having a choice of three positions because, as she explains, "I had taught for this board before and...I'm a hard worker" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). Her experiences in that first year helped her regain her independence and confidence, however, the time demands were enormous as she continued to be the primary caretaker of her family. Darlene tells of her return to the classroom:

> When I went back teaching, I found it really, really busy because the kids were young...I just worked really hard...you have so much planning and preparation that's all new. Things had changed so much and...I lost weight...just because I was on the go full time...Every subject area I would say required re-planning. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

With her husband away from home a great deal, she found herself having to hire a babysitter for the evenings she wanted to return to the school in order to do the work she was unable to bring home. There was not enough time during the day to plan and do all of the marking, something she felt she needed to do immediately after the children finished in order to monitor their progress. Meeting all the demands of teaching and mothering "wasn't something that was really easy to work out" (Conversation, June 18, 1992).

Having parents in the classroom is also part of Darlene's story and, initially, she preferred to work alone:

> I think probably when I went back, it was more a threat, but maybe it was because I was unsure of myself. I just think that when you first go back and you've been off for six years and you're so overwhelmed that it's almost too much to have a parent, like that's just something

else you have to think about. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

With increased confidence, Darlene gradually invited parents into her classroom and she now welcomes them as partners in their children's education. I remember one woman in particular who was a regular helper for Ryan, a child with special needs. Darlene talked of her own comfort in having this woman in her classroom as she described how Ryan could often be found sitting comfortably on his helper's knee, content and happy as he listened to a story. A nurturing, maternal warmth was, and continues to be, a natural part of Darlene's classroom.

As a teacher without her own children or as a mother at home, Darlene lived a sense of balance. Her focus was either being as a teacher or being as a mother, feeling a sense of personal fulfilment with each. It was when the two came together with her children at an age where they needed her attention most, along with the demands of full time teaching, that she lived with a feeling of discord and incongruity. She felt overwhelmed with the expectations she set for herself.

Likewise, Darlene lived with an overwhelming sense of dissonance when, after she had been back in the classroom for a few years, she went from full time to part time teaching. She told this story early in our conversations, remembering it as a highlight of the feelings she experienced with her own children being in school:

> The year I went half time, I was approached (by school division personnel) if I wanted to go half time and I said no, I'm prepared, my kids are older and I'm just fully prepared to be full time. And when I came home, I talked it over with Russell, he just said oh, that's ridiculous. Go for it!...I had to let them know by Monday so over the weekend, I all of a sudden changed from a full time to a part time teacher and I had everything ready, set up. I had this beautiful class, it was the most beautiful class I will have taught...I had never experienced being home and not working and not having my kids there. It was the first time I felt that nobody needed me. It was really traumatic. Because I had not planned to teach part-time, I was not prepared emotionally to make the change. It took a few weeks to adjust my thinking. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

She lived with a deep sense of loss both for her children no longer needing her as much as they had when they were younger, and for not being needed full time in the classroom.

Seven years following that year of part time teaching, Darlene chose to teach part time again for a year in order to take advantage of travel opportunities with her husband and to spend more time on interests both inside and outside of the classroom. Unlike her earlier experience of teaching part-time, she was ready for such a change and was able to take advantage of the experience as a time of renewal both personally and professionally.

Darlene's stories of returning to teaching full-time and her decision to work part-time tell of the tension between the self-enhancing nature of teaching and mothering and the extreme physical/emotional demands of living both. Willard (1988) writes, "care of self and care of others need not be seen as opposing choices" (p. 232), and yet, cultural scripts prescribe opposing expectations, that of not being fulfilled unless one is a "selfless wife and mother" as well as a full time career woman (Willard, 1988, p. 228).

Empathy

Darlene talked of her first year in teaching:

> I can remember having a discussion in our staffroom...I was saying you have to respect children...it's important for children to respect you but you also have to respect them and so I think I'm a fairly empathetic person. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

Empathy is a narrative thread woven throughout her life. She spoke, however, of her heightened sensitivity to what children experience, a sensitivity she developed from having had her own children. The following tells of how this is lived out in her own teaching:

> I can remember when a teacher wouldn't let Laura go into the school

> to use the washroom and she had an accident. I was angry. As a result, I allow children to go in but remind them to come back outside quickly. Whatever feelings that your child experiences, I think as a mother you experience the same feelings... You're very empathetic towards them...I imagine or think about my own child in my class room and...I think because of that, I am more concerned that they did feel good about the year, that it is successful. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

Darlene's empathy towards parents is also heightened because of her own experiences. She shares stories of her own children in order to help her students' parents feel more comfortable, "to say that children develop at different stages" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). She also acknowledges that her expectations of parents are greater because she takes her responsibility as a parent very seriously. However, she does not express it to them, "because I don't think it's my place to do that" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). To her, parenting is not "black and white", and her experiences with her own children bring a new understanding of what they may be experiencing, making it easier for her to talk to parents about difficulties they may be living through.

Ambitious Work

Bateson (1989) wrote, "women are often stimulated to more ambitious and creative work when they see that work supporting someone they love" (p. 82). When I asked what she would show in a portfolio, Darlene spoke of her ambition and creativity, seen both in the care of her own children and the students in her classroom.

I asked if it was easy for her to get a job when she decided to return to the classroom full time. "Yes it was, actually," she replied. "One of my better qualities is that I am ambitious." Ambition is traditionally thought to be a word associated with climbing a ladder in one's career, "desiring a specific attainment" (Oxford English Dictionary, p. 23). Webster (1979) defines it as "an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power...having a desire to achieve a particular goal" (p. 35). Darlene brings a different meaning to the term since when one looks at her life as a teacher, she has not followed a traditional career of climbing the hierarchical ladder to administration in education, nor does she consider climbing the ladder in her future. To Darlene, ambition means working hard to provide the best education she can for her students. It is told in her commitment to her work, which she defines as "doing the best for each child" (Conversation, June 18, 1992) and is seen in her strong sense of professionalism, the value she sees in keeping abreast with changes in education. It also means being the best mother she can be, providing a home where her own children are protected and nurtured through her caretaking.

In Darlene's terms, her "ambition" provided a way for her to utilize her creativity and experience as a teacher while raising her own children. While away from the classroom, Darlene and four other women in the community set up a home pre-school where they took turns bringing their toddlers to each other's homes, with the person whose home they were at being responsible for the day's activities. Made up primarily of teachers, the group was also a community that shared and valued mothering, providing support for the day to day demands of nurturing children.

Darlene's strong sense of professionalism is part of her ambition and is shown in her enthusiasm for attending conferences and learning about new ideas in education. She remains closely connected with a friend and colleague who holds the position of Language Arts consultant with a school board several hours away. They attend conferences together, sharing an openness to learning and growing as teachers, eager to evaluate and implement new developments in education.

The intensity of Darlene's professional development interests have changed with shifts in her personal/professional foci. Her return to the classroom full time following time at home with her children tells of such a change in focus, a temporary fading of her involvement in formal professional development activities:

> Whatever conferences I would go to for the first few years...I was so overwhelmed I quit going to them...I just thought, I've got all I can handle right now. Everytime I would go to one, I'd think, okay, now I have to do this a different way. All it meant to me was work at that point in time. Later when I had the basic things (handling the curriculum changes, getting my program set up) under control, I was very excited about going to a conference. (Conversation, June 18, 1992)

Darlene does not speak of her future in terms of attaining a particular achievement or rank but instead sees new possibilities for her classroom with changes in the curriculum. Her "ambitiousness" will continue to be lived out as she focuses on new challenges, embracing change with confidence and vigour.

Congruity

There is a sense that Darlene feels balanced with her present work as a teacher and a mother, knowing that the time and energy devoted to her children has been worthwhile and valuable. She acknowledges how she can now reap the benefits of her early work, stepping back and watching them grow into independent young adults.

Ruddick (1989) writes, "when you *see* children as demanding care, the reality of their vulnerability and the necessity of a caring response seems unshakable" (p. 18). Darlene lives this passion in her work as a maintainer both in the classroom and at home. She shares Bateson's (1989) feelings that "the caretaking has to be done...individually we underestimate this need, and as a society we make inadequate provision for it" (p. 140). It is through Darlene's stories that we can look at the ambitious work of maintaining as caretaking, to see the ambiguity and multiplicity of such work as enhancing creativity, enriching one's life with endless possibilities.

Chapter 7

Libby

In Her Own Words: A Mosaic

> *I never intended to go back full time. And it was the end of November (when) I put in my application and I received a call from a principal at (an elementary school). She had actually been a principal and teacher to my own children at our local school here and she knew I was looking for a job so that's how she happened to phone me...she said she had this full time job opening up, grade sixes. The teacher who was teaching them was leaving and my first reaction was, I don't want a full time job. But she was very convincing and as the conversation went on, I came to understand that the class was a really difficult one and that what she wanted more than anything was someone to come in to be supportive and be their friend in a way because they had had a rotten beginning to the year...Well, I think part of me began to say, boy, this is a challenge. This is something I'd like to be able to do. Why not go for it is what was going on in my head. And so I went over to have an interview with her and I found myself becoming extremely enthusiastic about doing it, knowing it would take a lot out of me but feeling that I had all the energy that I needed to do it...maybe even being overly confident at that point, that I was going to walk into that classroom and I knew exactly what I was going to do with these kids. (Conversation, May 13. 1992)*

As she speaks, there is a sureness about Libby; vibrance and enthusiasm in her voice. She is tanned and athletic and has the look of an energetic outdoors woman. Her carefully arranged living room is decorated in light, earth tones and there is a sense of thoughtful planning in the placement of artifacts and photos that tell of the life of a well-travelled family.

Libby's story tells of returning to the classroom as a teacher, part of the paid profession, after seventeen years. It is important to clarify here what is meant by "returning to the classroom" because Libby never really left. While she decided not to teach following the birth of her first of three children, she continued to live in classrooms throughout her own children's schooling as an active mother-volunteer. The stories she lived with her children both in and out of the classroom tell of Libby as a "teacher/mother, mother/teacher" (Kennedy, 1992).

Libby would call herself a structured, organized person, one who has difficulty understanding "how people can move throughout life without making lists and having strategies and planning ahead" (Conversation, May 13, p. 2). Structure, for Libby, does not mean inflexibility. Her stories as motifs that make up the mosaic of her life tell of pliancy and adaptation as she has, and continues to, embrace challenges and change.

Foundations: Multiple Beginnings

Bateson (1989) writes of the emerging patterns of "multiple commitments and multiple beginnings" (p. 17) in the lives of women. For Libby, "multiple fresh starts" (Bateson, 1989, p. 236) have been enriching and exciting, providing ways for her to stretch her capabilities and build a strong sense of self.

Libby spoke of confidence in her ability, confidence cultivated while she was growing up in her own family where she was expected to continue her education following high school. With the encouragement and support of her parents, she ventured out on her own at the age of seventeen to attend a liberal arts college in another part of the country. It was a difficult time for her, as she felt quite alone in adjusting to her new school far from home. However, she came to see these experiences as opportunities to develop self confidence and independence. She valued her own growth from that experience so much that her two oldest children are presently living a similar story as they attend college many miles from home.

Libby enjoyed working with children. Her early experiences as a camp counsellor lead her to a teaching program following her liberal arts degree. Libby's enthusiasm for subject matter, particularly history, is one that was cultivated in her early education and continues to be lived out in her classroom today. As she explained, "I get very excited about subject matter and about learning a lot more about ancient Greece than the curriculum tells me I have to know" (Conversation, May 27, 1992).

Libby's first year of teaching in 1965 was a new beginning both as a professional and as a member of a new community. She and a friend decided to move together, securing teaching positions at the west coast, an area distant from their family homes. Following her first two years of teaching, Libby married and moved to be with her husband who was attending university in another city. Upon his graduation, they again moved and settled in a new city which has been their home base for the past twenty years. Sabbaticals have taken them overseas. With each move prior to the birth of her children, she secured a teaching position. As a mother, she remained connected with schools as a volunteer and enjoyed the diversity of experiences in new educational settings.

The sense of adventure lived in her early years as a student and beginning teacher is woven throughout Libby's life as a mother, volunteer, wife, and educator. She loves learning and with her positive outlook, I get a sense of her openness to changes and moves and her eagerness to know and become part of new communities. For her, moving offered opportunities for multiple beginnings as transitions rather than interruptions, ways to reconstruct and recreate past learning to live out in new communities.

Communities

It's our job, everybody's job to find out what we're able to do and do it well and hopefully make that a contribution to others...we're all important to society, to the world. (Conversation, May 27, 1992)

Communities are dynamic, ever changing and over-lapping. From the latin "communis" meaning "fellowship...joint or common ownership", communities encompass "relations or feelings" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989a, p. 581). They are living sources of strength, nurturing and supportive spaces within which we learn about ourselves through others.

We are connected through communities and communities are connected through us. While we may physically move in and out of them, we are changed because of these connections as we bring our experiences with us to live out in new ways in new communities. For Libby, who shares in many communities both in and out of schools, these connections are integral to who she is as a mother and a teacher.

Communities of teachers have been, and continue to be, sources of strength and growth for her. Her early teaching stories tell of positive student teaching experiences with two older women who were, as Libby described, "really good models for me" (Conversation, May 27, p. 2).

As a young teacher, she also had the opportunity to participate in a curriculum development project that encompassed a community of teachers, administrators, parents and students. The program was developed in response to parental concern over the human sexuality component of a Family Life Education Program. Over the course of a year, the team worked on the program and Libby spoke of this as a "wonderful example of what curriculum should be", although she acknowledged the tremendous time and thought that was needed to "do it well" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). In contrast to an earlier curriculum change that was imposed, and therefore not well received, the community planning experience lead to successful implementation of the program.

Libby is committed to her classroom and professional community. As she explained, "commitment...means to decide in your own mind what it is you are choosing to do and then to do it to the best of your ability" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). The increasing expectations of teaching have shaped her view of seeing the profession as "all sorts of compartments" with her priority being to "take on a commitment to those kids that are in my classroom and to teaching them to the best of my ability" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). She lives a commitment to her profession as a whole by being the best she can be as a classroom teacher and is careful to limit the external time commitments asked of her.

Libby's commitment to community is found both in how she lives and works as a teacher and through her sense of responsibility for the community within which she lives. She brings the two together in her goals for her students and her own children when she speaks of wanting them to have a sense of "the need to give to other people, to somehow be in a volunteer capacity at some point in your life" (Conversation, May 27, 1992). She lives a strong sense of responsibility towards the global community as a whole and recognizes this same empathy as lacking in many ways in the lives of children today. She sees helping others as a way to learn about ourselves and works to instill a sense of compassion for others in her day-to-day work as a mother and a teacher.

Libby thrives in communities, those found in schools and the broader, global community within which she lives. She knows herself, her capabilities, and how she can best contribute to her communities. At the same time, she recognizes that commitment to communities can be all-encompassing so she continually assesses and re-assesses, pulling back sometimes when a commitment demands too much of her, or, when she feels she's "done enough" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). This is particularly telling when her work as a teacher, work she feels can go on forever and can become increasingly demanding, infringes too far on her much valued time for her family and herself. As she explains, it's "a continual juggling act" between her expectations of herself as a teacher and the time and energy she wants and needs to spend in her home and family communities

(Conversation, May 13, 1992).

Home Mothering, Home Teaching

> *My mother never dreamed of working outside of the home and I grew up with parents who assumed that I would not work outside of the home. I was to get a good Liberal Arts education...in the manner that my mother had...and be a good wife and an intelligent person and probably do volunteer work. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)*

Libby described herself as being "caught between two-generations", re-living the stories of her own mother and yet seeing other possibilities for herself and other women close to her who, for the most part, work outside of the home. At the same time, however, Libby loves being at home with her children. Bateson (1989), in her description of a mother who lives divided between her home and her profession, could also be speaking of Libby when she says, "having (her children) is clearly a delight to her and an enrichment of her life, but she is still pulled in different directions" (p. 165).

As a mother at home, Libby has remained connected with schools both for the benefit of her own children and for her own growth as "an exciting way to be involved in education other than being a teacher" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). These connections not only lead to her first position when she returned to teaching, but are also very much a part of how she has grown as a teacher. Living in schools as a mother volunteer has provided opportunities for her to observe and learn from other teachers, opportunities not so readily available when one is engaged in teaching full time. She told of a teacher with whom she connected:

> I was aware of a Social Studies teacher that (my daughter) had in junior high...who was absolutely magnificent...I think that he indirectly affected how I teach Social Studies now just because I saw (my daughter's) projects and caught on to her enthusiasm...I was aware of how he was involved with global education and a lot of current events work which I've always tried to incorporate too. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

Although living as a mother in her children's classrooms has also meant seeing through the eyes of a teacher, Libby is careful "to be the parent and the volunteer and not to be the teacher" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). Having lived as a classroom teacher, she is empathetic towards those who teach her own children, being "very understanding of whatever faults I may see in them because all it takes is looking at myself and I know that if anyone examined me very carefully, there would be some things they could be very critical of but I would hope that there would be things they could be positive about" (Conversation, May 13, 1992).

While very conscious of the demands of teaching, Libby's high expectations of herself are also translated into high expectations for her profession, posing a dilemma when encountering occasional difficult situations involving her children's teachers. In working through such a dilemma, which Libby acknowledges is "usually a matter of wanting some understanding, some clarification", she brings her experiences as a mother and a teacher, seeing the complexities of both. "I'm always conscious of giving the teacher the benefit of the doubt because I want others to give me the benefit of the doubt" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). While remaining committed to the well-being of her children, she is aware of the dilemmas of classroom teaching, questioning only those decisions she considers to be morally unsound.

As a mother at home, Libby is also a teacher at home. She tells of when she developed her own curriculum to help her son develop skills in report writing. By junior high, he was very capable of organizing and presenting the information on his own. Through living with her son's early and difficult attempts at writing reports, Libby's concern with providing helpful and specific guidance for children is lived out in her classroom today. After having lived and learned through her own children's experiences, she describes herself as providing more structure in her classroom in order to guide children through a process.

Libby's stories tell of her life as a mother in teaching at home, and a teacher who is a mother at school. Her life as a mother at home has "added a new dimension" to her teaching, a confidence in her ability and sense of security in "having raised three children who so far seem to be just fine" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). It is in her return to the classroom that Libby is "living out these new ways of seeing" (Clandinin and Connelly, in preparation, p. 5) as a mother in teaching.

Returning to Classroom Teaching

> *I felt, after seventeen years, that I wasn't coming back to something that was very familiar to me. It was like starting over again...there was a lot about it that felt like I'm doing this for the first time. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)*

Bateson (1989) writes of life as an "improvisatory art...the ways we combine familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations, following an underlying grammar and an evolving aesthetic" (p. 3). For Libby, returning to teaching is a story of such improvisation. She told of when she walked back into the classroom as a teacher:

> As I actually entered the classroom and started doing things, there was a familiar feeling and I was also amazed at how many things I was reminded of that I had done before. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

For many teachers, there is a sense of feeling at home in a classroom, and although there were many changes in education, Libby found herself drawing upon her past experiences:

> What came back to me were ideas that had worked. I can remember driving to school one day and seeing the sun rising and thinking, oh, I remember that art lesson I did seventeen years ago or twenty years ago. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

She also felt confident, from her earlier teaching and having raised her own children, that she could "develop a reasonable rapport with most kids" (Conversation, May 13, 1992).

Although Libby had taken University courses prior to her return to classroom teaching, she found that the language of teaching was new to her. As she explained, "there were a large number of terms and concepts that I had no inkling about...whole language...brainstorming...mind-mapping...webbing...they just all came at me in those first weeks of teaching and I thought, boy, I have missed a lot in these seventeen years" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). The new language has brought exciting new ways of living in the classroom for Libby and she has "shed" some of her old ways of thinking, incorporating new ideas that work for her.

Libby also found changes in the profession itself where she felt the demands of teaching both in and out of the classroom had increased dramatically. She sees her colleagues as dedicated, hard-working professionals who are very demanding of themselves, and feels the same pressure for herself in terms of extra meetings, in being more accountable as to what she does in the classroom, and in maintaining close contact with parents. She feels more time is needed in her schedule to spend with children individually, to meet with their parents, to talk with colleagues, and to reflect upon her own teaching. Each time she walks into the school, "it's just constant motion or constant being alert the whole time" (Conversation, May 13, 1992), requiring a tremendous amount of energy and dedication.

In her contact with parents she feels she has a better understanding of what they may be going through at home. She feels this understanding brings more credibility to her work in teaching. As she explained, "I think that I'm probably more able now to see kids and make speculations as to why they are the way they are and then have it confirmed or not confirmed when talking to parents" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). She is careful when sharing her own dilemmas with parents:

> I don't want to come across as someone who has succeeded and I'm now talking to someone who I feel has really done a lousy job. I would rather identify with the difficulties as opposed to the successes because I also feel that people have to work things out in their own way...there's no formula. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

At the same time, however, her expectations of parents are high, knowing the care and dedication she gives to her own children and how necessary that is for their learning at school. She is concerned for the change she sees in students today who, she feels, often do not see the value in working hard and investing time and energy in their work.

Evaluation as Affirmation

> *When I (returned to the classroom) and would end a day feeling I had done nothing, (the principal) was the first to point out all that I had done and she would send me home and say, 'Forget about it, just come back tomorrow.' She was wonderful and I think that because she believed in me, I believed in myself. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)*

Libby's commitment to her students and her confidence in her abilities as a teacher and mother are lived out in her stories of evaluation. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) describe connected teachers as those who listen to, learn from, and believe in their students. The principal who hired Libby for her recent position extended this connectedness to her work with teachers by creating a space for growth with her support and guidance:

> The woman I had the first three years after going back to the classroom did her evaluation in a way which I really appreciated

> which was simply to write you out a several page essay...In it, she focused on your accomplishments and it was a very positive sort of evaluation indicating what strengths you had. She came into the class a couple of times formally...she always let you know ahead of time and then she was informally in the class a lot of the time...I was minorly anxious...but it was never something I was really uncomfortable with...The first year (back) I didn't even think about it. How I was being evaluated was not the first thing on my mind. I was just trying to teach these kids. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

Returning to teaching with the encouragement and support of a connected administrator was, for Libby, a re-living of evaluation as an affirmation of her strengths as a teacher. Her earlier evaluation stories tell of principals coming into her classroom on occasion to observe her teaching and supporting her in her work. As she explained, "evaluations haven't been a problem for me" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). However, one story from her early teaching stood out for her as a negative experience:

> (A district supervisor) came in and she observed my class and it was in a bit of an upheaval I think and she afterwards commented to my principal that she thought I had behaviour problems...My principal came to me and shared this with me and he just shook his head and said, 'But I know you don't. It's not a problem.' I remember that

> there was a part of me that was offended by this because I wasn't used to being evaluated negatively and so I didn't think that was quite fair. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

Support from the principal throughout the experience was an affirmation of her success in the classroom. For her work now, evaluation is not particularly stressful since, as she explained, "I've established myself well enough as a teacher" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). It is also knowing that teaching for her is not limited to the paid profession:

> (Classroom) teaching is...an important part of my life but it's not an essential part of my life...If someone were to say to me you are fired...I would I'm sure go through a certain turmoil and this would be hard on me to a certain extent...I would find a situation where I could probably do some form of teaching, perhaps volunteering or tutoring. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

For Libby, the multiple beginnings in her life tell of the possibilities for many more.

Tensions

Shadbolt (1979) wrote of the tensions lived in the movements and rhythms of Emily Carr's paintings, tensions that are "essential to any successful work" (p. 140). Libby's story is also a living out of tensions, the pull between wanting to be at home and wanting to be in the classroom, and the pull between being a mother and being a teacher. Like Shadbolt, she sees tensions as healthy opportunities for growth, part of the "nature of being human" (Conversation, May 13, 1992).

Bateson (1989) tells us that "often we lose a part of life because of what we choose to retain, leaving either a home or a career to retain the other" (p. 220). Although Libby felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment in finishing the year successfully with her grade sixes, the all-encompassing nature of teaching meant that it took over her life. Teaching became her focal point and in order to support her work, her husband and children took over much of the maintenance of their home. As she explained, "I sort of wanted to live two lives I think and I had to give a lot up (in the home) when I was working full time" (Conversation, May 13, 1992). Her focus has since shifted as she wanted to spend more time with her family both at home and in their schools so after three years of full time teaching, she accepted a half time position. With this change came a sense of not having enough time to develop as close a relationship with her students as she would like, but there has been more time for her to reflect upon her own teaching, time she feels should be built in for all teachers.

Libby told of the tension she lives day to day in the classroom as she explained, "there's nothing I'm more enthusiastic about at times" while at other times, there's nothing as frustrating. It's "a feeling of going from feeling really capable to feeling totally inept and it's amazing to me how that can vary so much from day to day...it really takes a sixth sense I think" (Conversation, May 13, 1992).

You're Always a Teacher

> *If there's a big group of my kids' friends over and I find it's too noisy, there's a part of me that instinctively is going to say something that a teacher would say, as opposed to just letting it run its course. I think I've done okay at that but it's not always my instinct. I often hear the teacher in me in situations that aren't at school and I don't like that but I think that's the way we are. We're reacting that way for so many hours each day that it's hard to turn it off.*

Grumet (1988) wrote of the boundaries women live as mothers in teaching, lines that ask women to separate their knowing as mothers from their work in teaching. Libby's story of teaching her son at home became part of another story of the dilemma of blurred lines between being a mother and being a teacher. This story connects back to the tensions in living as a mother in teaching, as Libby found herself questioning the decisions of a fellow professional:

> There was a prime example when my son was in grade eight and he

> had a Science report to do...We had schooled him in the process of report writing...so he was taking notes, he was making outlines, he was doing a rough draft. By grade eight, he was good at doing it all by himself. He did this Science paper and we watched him because stuff was all over his room. He pulled it together and turned it in, and he got something like a fifty percent on it. The comment at the end was, there was one brief comment and it did not say this has been plagiarized but it suggested that this could not be your own writing...Our son didn't understand, had no idea why he got such a low mark, nor did we. So I didn't want to go in as a teacher so I had my husband go in. (The teacher) did feel that this must have been plagiarized and so we had all the evidence of how he had put this paper together but it obviously was an affront to the teacher and he raised his mark a little bit. But it was a very unfortunate experience because our son's attitude to his next paper was, 'I can't do it.' And it really sort of set him back. (Conversation, May 13, 1992)

For Libby, teacher and mother cannot be separated, at times creating tensions of how this is lived at home and at school.

Connections

Wilson (1977) wrote about tensions as dynamic, giving a sense of motion and pliancy as focuses change, blend, or fade. Tensions may therefore be energizing and renewing if one is able to see the connections rather than dissonance. Libby's story is an exploration of the connections she lives between home and school, mother and teacher.

Libby takes a firm stance for what she believes in and at the same time, is accepting and understanding of others. Her openness to change is accompanied with her confidence in her own abilities, and she combines the two in her thoughtfulness and concern as a teacher and a mother. She values her own knowing and complements it with new experiences in new communities, drawing on the past to look forward to new possibilities.

As Bateson (1989) tells us, "an affirmation of continuity among various stages and commitments is such a central strength" (p. 41), strength that is found in the textures of Libby's life. Her stories told as "mosaics" may be seen as pieces that make up her portrait and yet, through the connections, the strong defined lines, there is a sense of wholeness for to Libby, "everything is connected" (Conversation, May 13, 1992).

Chapter 8

Margie

Lifescape: A Journey Through Story

I drove to Margie's on a sunny, spring afternoon. The neighbourhood was a picturesque community with rows of comfortable, modern family homes, green grass and flowers. I was nervous as I rang the doorbell. How would we begin? Would she even want to work with me? Margie came to the door from her backyard where she had been gardening. She smiled a friendly hello and I found myself relaxing a little for I saw many women I knew and loved in her. She is tall and athletic with tremendous energy and vitality. I sensed a certain confidence about her as she walked with purpose, telling of her busy life as a mother and teacher.

She asked if I wanted some peppermint tea. Yes, I answered gratefully, something warm to hold on to. We settled in the family room, a space filled with photos of three smiling little girls, Meghan, Jillian, and Allison.

We met on one of the two afternoons a week that Margie was not at her school for she is one of four women in her school district who hold part-time administrative positions. I planned this to be an introduction to my research, a time to answer any questions she may have had. It wasn't until later when I realized the research had begun long before we had met and that this first conversation would be essential to our story.

We met four times over the course of seven months and I had the pleasure of meeting and spending time with her daughters as we drove to ballet lessons, walked them home from school, and shared after school snacks. For one of our times together, our conversation was accompanied by Meghan's piano practice. While Margie's story is central to this research, I envision her portrait with Meghan, Jillian, and Allison standing with her for their stories are her story of teaching and mothering.

To paint Margie's life, I am taken back to the journals of Emily Carr (1966) where she writes:

> It seems to me that a large part of painting is a longing, a fluid movement ahead, a pouring forward towards the unknown, not a prying into things beyond but a steady pressing towards the barriers, an effort to be on hand when the barriers lift. A picture is just an on-the-way thing, not something caught and static, something frozen in its tracks, but a joyous going, towards what? We don't know. Music is full of longing and movement. Painting should be the same. (p. 288)

Carr could be writing of Margie's life for her passion is lived in the journey, the questions that lead her to asking more questions. Margie spoke of a quotation she often refers to:

> It talks about life as enjoying the questions...that describes me far more than someone who enjoys the answers. They're not really relevant. Once they become an answer, I move on. The question I

> can stay with a long time. (Conversation, April 29, 1992)

Margie's life is a landscape: fluid, colourful, and full. It is in her living as a mother, teacher, and administrator, that the movement is found as each focus comes to the forefront, fades, and returns again. At times, she is comfortable with changes, she embraces them, and takes the lead. At other times, she lives a sense of loss, feeling she has to give up one for another, for when the spotlight changes, as a different aspect of her life is illuminated, another fades. Her story is found in the intensity of the light for she lives her life passionately, not wanting to miss a moment, treasuring her family while at the same time loving the energy and excitement found in teaching. Her portrait is a "lifescape", a panorama of energy and emotion, as she lives a deep sense of devotion to her children and to her profession. Central to her story is a search for a sense of wholeness, a meshing of mother, wife, teacher, daughter, administrator. Her story is a journey to find ways to feel anchored with all. Margie used a metaphor to tell of the story she lives:

> I have this kind of entangled ball at the middle...I get the ball ravelled out and then it kind of goes back in and then it ravels out...I could never leave it there. I have to pull it all back together, whether it's comfortable or not...I have very few places where my life stops here and starts there. Everything moves together and as long as I'm grounded, I'm okay...I have that congruency, I can manage living that

> way. It's when that congruency breaks down that it doesn't feel right. So I see lots of links, common threads...if I break it up in sections, I feel very alienated and apart. (Conversation, April 29, 1992)

Her stories are the threads, interwoven and at the same time pulling on each other, creating a tension that changes in intensity with the demands others ask of her or that she asks of herself. Margie's stories as threads may be seen as "moments of awareness" (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation), telling how and why she was drawn into teaching and how she now lives as a mother in teaching.

Grumet (1988) writes, "we have access, paths of feeling, of memory, into the gardens where our first worlds grew. That is the soil we need to turn over" (p. 191). A view of Margie's portrait begins with a journey into her garden of early stories of how she came to be part of the teaching profession, for it was her early connections with children that laid the groundwork for the passion she now lives as a teacher and a mother.

Becoming a Teacher

"I never saw myself as a teacher as a young person" Margie explained. Watching her father dedicate himself to his work as a high school teacher and principal initially turned Margie away from seeing herself in the teaching profession. However, she recalled two powerful experiences during her teens that left her with a sense of the importance of teaching:

> I remember one time in particular, a student that (my father) just had so much faith in and just thought would do really, really well and was the daughter of a poor farming family...He had just so much hope for her...One Sunday night, she appeared on our doorstep and she was crying...her parents had kicked her out because she was pregnant and she had no place to go...It was a very small rural community so she moved in and she moved right into my bed because there was no place for her to sleep...and I can remember lying in bed thinking, I am sleeping with a girl who's pregnant and this is...one of my dad's students. Eventually...her family accepted her back and my dad pushed even harder for her to finish her grade twelve and I can remember...it left me with really mixed feelings...and yet, I know part of that hooked me into how important teachers are.
>
> (Conversation, June 30, 1992)

In her late teens, Margie's love for sports lead her to lifeguarding as well as teaching swimming and teaching figure skating. However, she still wasn't thinking of becoming a teacher and, because of her love of history, enrolled in a program leading to a Bachelor of Arts. On the advice of University counsellors and because she wanted a job when she finished her degree, she changed into Physical Education, an area in which she felt very comfortable. She continued to lifeguard during University and told of the following as an experience that left "an incredible impression" on her:

> There was a boy who was in a wheelchair. He used to come and sit at the fence and watch us swim...when I think about it now, it probably seems very foreign but at that time, it wasn't...He did that for the longest time and I remember one day sitting there and thinking, why isn't he in here swimming...it took me days and days and days of watching him before that thought even crossed my mind...His mother would come and sit there with him because she had to push him over. And it was a really empty day in the pool and I went over and I talked to her and I said would he like to go swimming?...There's no reason why he couldn't come in on Sunday morning. So one Sunday morning we went down and he came over and we got this wheelchair and got him out and put a life-jacket on him and took him swimming. Well, this was just wonderful and of course, he wanted to come back and do it again. (Conversation, June 30, 1992)

With the help of a police officer who offered to assist lifting the children into the pool, the Sunday morning swims grew to include several children with disabilities, including a little girl with no hearing to whom Margie eventually gave private swimming lessons. Margie told of these as powerful experiences, awakenings to the joy and satisfaction of working with children and the challenge of "getting at their learning" (Conversation, June 30, 1992).

Her experiences with these children lead her to apply to a school in St. Louis where she could be trained as a teacher of children with hearing impairments. However, her plans changed after meeting her husband, Wayne, and she decided instead to stay in Calgary where she secured a position in elementary Physical Education with some learning assistance teaching. A job change for Wayne moved them to a different city where Margie was hired to teach French as a second language because of her background in French and because, as she explained, "I would take anything they would give me" (Conversation, June 30, 1992). She connected with a woman, her "mentor", who was involved in Language Arts. Together they explored more integrated ways to teach, sharing their experiences with University staff and student teachers. Margie's connections with the University became more central to her work as she combined it with her Learning Assistance teaching in an elementary school.

There is fluidity in Margie's journey in the classroom, for she speaks of her shifts and changes from fragmented days to providing more connected and open-ended experiences for children. This is a journey of endless possibilities to be lived out as she experienced living and learning through her own children and in those experiences enriched her vision of teaching and learning.

Becoming a Mother

Like her stories of teaching, Margie's stories of mothering are ones of always becoming, an endless journey of reliving and retelling stories with new textures and dimensions painted through the stories of her own children. As a teacher, she felt she was living only part of the story with children. She wanted to live the rest of the story outside of the classroom, to be part of a child's life from the beginning and to hear the stories of school told at the kitchen table.

With the birth of Meghan in 1979, Margie left classroom teaching and her focus shifted as her intensity continued to be lived in her story of mothering. "I was totally immersed in parenting and wanted to think and talk and live parenting" (Conversation, June 30, 1992). She wanted to know everything she could about being a mother and, as with teaching, wanted to view her children's lives in as many different lights as possible. Connections with community agencies and the school district through her work in early childhood programs added new dimensions to Margie's work as a mother, offering many enriching perspectives. During her third pregnancy, she was asked to work on practicum programming at the University and, with the support of the women with whom she worked, combined her work as a mother with these new experiences.

She continued to live a story of connections with early childhood education when a move to a different province for her husband's work saw her initiate involvement with a centre for child studies. Margie described it as "a very child-centred high professional group of teachers that work in conjunction with the University but on pre-school/early primary development" (Conversation, June 30. 1992). She began graduate work but found it "too much in isolation...I really know from that experience that I need the dynamic interaction (in teaching)" (Conversation, June 30, 1992). With her youngest daughter in kindergarten, she decided to return to classroom teaching, and the spotlight shifted from her work at home to work in teaching.

Returning to Teaching

Margie described how and why she decided to return to the classroom as a teacher, a position she was hired for through connections she had made with other educators in the district:

> I missed my profession. I missed the definition it gave me and I really got to the point where I felt I needed to go back to work...I had enjoyed my Learning Assistance position, or resource position working with children and so I thought that's the point where I would

> enter...Then I taught full time that year because I thought I had to get right back in, really get a feel for the district and the system.
>
> (Conversation, June 30, 1992)

Allison was in kindergarten the following year so Margie accepted a part-time teaching position in Learning Assistance. She applied for a position as a part-time vice-principal and began her work in administration in her third year back in the profession. A part-time position allowed her to both work and still be involved in her own children's education.

Margie's beliefs connect with Grumet's writing (1988) on creating a caring classroom community based on curriculum decisions involving the active participation of parents and children. Margie saw her part-time work as a way for educators to show how parents may be involved in their child's education, a kind of modelling of a possibility for other parents to live.

The stories Margie told of her life as a mother in teaching are stories of children, both her own and the children she teaches. They are the lens through which we may see Margie's visions of teaching and learning. They are also the threads of connection that tell of the increasing complexity of her life and the links she makes between her knowing as a mother and her knowing as a teacher.

Stories of Children

Margie spoke of her daughters as "my wise women, my mentors" (Conversation, November 10, 1992). For her, they provide paths into childhood, ways for her to live and re-live being a child. Through their eyes, she also has a view of her profession for their stories show her a child's view of life in the classroom.

Margie felt her children would be born as "clean slates" (Conversation, April 22, 1992) and it was only a few hours after Meghan was born when she realized many of the blanks were already filled in. "Children are not clean slates...they come with so much" (Conversation, April 22, 1992). Margie's stories of her daughters tell of how different they are and how her work as a mother is unique to the needs of each one. They also tell of the connection she lives between mother and teacher, a connection that Grumet (1988) tells us is often hidden as women move from their maternal labour at home to the public domain of school. This connection was lived as Margie moved from her work with children at school to her life as a mother with her own children. Margie's journey is one of celebrating her knowing as a mother in teaching, for in every step she takes, the stories of her daughters are with her.

Meghan

For Margie and many other women (Grumet, 1988; Kennedy, 1992), mother and teacher are always there. They may be seen as rays of light embedded in the panorama of life, at times blending and overlapping. Margie's stories of Meghan tell of the shifting focus from mother to teacher, a blur of movement back and forth many times over the year. They also tell of the tensions lived in Margie's expectations both for her daughter and for her profession, as Meghan began grade one:

> I found that year an emotional roller coaster. It had little to do with Meghan's experiences, it had a lot to do with my expectations. Because I had been a teacher, I spent so much of my interaction with Meghan as a teacher...So I looked at how she formed her letters, and I looked at how she read...the things she took an interest in...the books she brought home from school...how she interacted on the playground and it was like I had seen the sum total of my teaching experience through this one little child...I wanted her to share all the enthusiasm for education that I felt. But she wasn't me and she hadn't had my experience. She was a little six year old child in a whole new world and she had a great big dinosaur at home called mom who wanted her to have that whole experience...And that was an incredible, incredible experience for me...(Teachers) see your child in

> a very different light. They say something like 'a non-reader' in November and you're hanging on your fingernails with your claws outstretched...How could she make that assessment of my child! Of course my child's reading. Well the truth is, no, your child is not reading in November. (Conversation, April 29, 1992)

Margie's experiences with Meghan gave her new insights into how parents who are teachers view their own children's teachers. She felt it may be somewhat more complex in that mothers who are teachers are familiar with the language and culture of teaching from within the profession:

> I was so consumed with the experience of the child and the materials the teacher had prepared and how she was delivering them and her timing and sense of humour and how she directed the children...Teachers...look at all that stuff that parents wouldn't look at that aren't teaching. (Conversation, April 29, 1992)

Jillian

Jillian was nine years old when I spent time with Margie for this research. For Margie, Jill's stories paint another picture of the endless possibilities for how children learn and the ways in which teachers are characters in these stories. With Jillian, Margie spoke of herself as more of a facilitator, a supporter through her learning rather a director. Margie told a story of Jill who, when she has a choice to do three out of eight activities for an assignment, assumes one would want to do all eight. Stepping back, Margie finds herself asking how she can support her daughter make these decisions on her own. At the beginning of grade four, Jillian announced she was going to have all "A's" by the end of the year. When she brought home her report card in June, the marks were all "A's" and "E's". As a very determined child, Jill has a clear vision of what things should look like, embracing learning with an intensity much like Margie's. Margie spoke of her as "the doer that people are watching" (Conversation, April 29, 1992).

Margie spends time as a volunteer for Jill's Girl Guide Company as a way to see Jill in a different setting, to view her in another light. Her work as a volunteer is a way for her to look at each fiber and capture the details of her daughter's life. Her work with her daughters in sports, music, and community activities, help maintain the connections so important to their relationships. Margie told of their time together in these settings. "We're always glad to see each other. We do a lot of catching up" (Conversation, June 30, 1992).

Allison

Allison's stories are threads that pull particularly hard for Margie. Allison was six when we first met and she was getting ready for baseball practice. "I don't really like PD days," she told me. "My mom doesn't get to be home with us." Margie told of her return to teaching when Allison was in playschool:

> The difficulty was not in the profession but in my home life. I just felt an incredible amount of guilt, over-whelming guilt. I know the first week back, my youngest and I just sat down and cried every night together. She'd say, 'I miss you so much, Mommy.' And you know, that was a real struggle for me. (Conversation, June 30, 1992)

Because Wayne worked at home in the mornings, Allison stayed with her dad, and went to a babysitter's after playschool in the afternoons. Margie would pick her up as soon as possible after school and then return to her classroom in the evenings to finish her work.

This pull continues to be lived out in Margie's present work as an administrator. She has to be at school earlier than when she taught in the classroom, and explained, "you either are or you don't do the job" (Conversation, April 29, 1992). Margie told this story of Allison, one lived because she has to leave before the girls do:

> Allison...always walks me out to the car...Every morning that's a pull because I leave her, she doesn't leave me. There's a big, big difference when the separation always comes from someone leaving you...And that's one I really struggle with. (Conversation, April 29,

> 1992)

One week instead of working in the girls' schools on Tuesday afternoon, Margie took a full day Monday to go on field trips with Jill's and Allison's classes. The next day, Allison left her mom a note, thinking she would also be coming in on her regular day. Margie found the note when she got home from work at the end of the day. She told the following of the difficulty for Allison:

> She finds that hard. It's a let down for her and she's not old enough to make (the) swap (of) when you came Monday...you're not going to come Tuesday. For her, what she wants is, you come on Tuesday and isn't it great you've got another day to come on Monday. It's not a net gain for her to change the day, in fact it's almost a loss because I've disrupted her routine. She's the one I know that will suffer the impact the greatest, me not being at home. (Conversation, April 29, 1992)

"Part-Time" Work

Bateson (1989) wrote, "often we lose a part of life because of what we choose to retain, leaving either a home or a career to retain the other" (p. 220). For Margie, it is not as simple as choosing between her work as a mother or as a teacher. Her story is one of wanting to hold on to both and not to give up one for the other. She spends Tuesday afternoons in her own children's schools and Thursday afternoons for "all the rest of the things in my life that I have to do" (Conversation, April 22, 1992).

It is difficult for Margie to leave the school on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, knowing she is leaving loose threads. She spoke of the commonly held view of administrators as the people, along with the custodians, who are perceived to be the ones always at the school. Margie is not there all the time and she feels it is particularly difficult for the people with whom she works. She senses the dilemmas they live, with her part-time work, realizing their jobs are more complicated because of how much she misses some of the day-to-day details of the life of the school community. She told a story of a teacher who came in to see her, frustrated because she had wanted to see her earlier. The teacher had asked her, "So, when are you here?" (Conversation, April 29, 1992).

Margie calls her school office her "room". It is a sunny, inviting space with children's stories pinned on the wall. Margie told a story of when she was recently working in her room when she heard a little girl singing in the room next to her's. She was drawn to the voice and found the child in the room next to her's where parents volunteer for the Safe Arrival program. One of the mothers had brought her younger daughter who was lying on the floor, colouring, and singing a song she had made up about mountains.

Margie was very moved by this moment, remembering her own children's moments and re-living them as she watched the little girl. She could picture her own girls lying on the rug and colouring at home. It made her think about what she was missing in being at school:

> One of the things I think I miss out on that I think is really important, and now I don't have, is we don't have the time when we get in each other's hair or nerves. You know when you spend a lot of time together and you deal with an issue and it goes over and over again. We don't have that time in our relationship to deal with that...Sometimes I'm really grateful we don't, meaning that we might be dealing with an issue and they go off to school and I go off to work and we come home and we've all forgotten about it. I think sometimes when you keep on dealing with an issue you grow and I'm not sure whether we get that growth time...So I wonder if we finish off some of the stuff we need to...I don't have the role in their life of being the judge, probably because I'm not around to do that. (Conversation, June 30, 1992)

A story Margie told of Meghan tells of the dilemmas she lives in teaching while raising her own children, particularly when two important events coincide. One evening, Margie directed a sharing session with parents at a meeting on "Social Responsibility". This was the same night that

Meghan was playing at a school concert. Neither Margie nor Wayne could be at the concert, even though they knew how important it was for them to be there. Margie felt hypocritical giving the inservice while her own daughter was celebrating musical accomplishments without her parents there.

There is a constant pull between home and school, giving Margie a feeling of being "schizophrenic, although that's not a healthy word" (Conversation, April 29, 1992). Finding ways to live with her dilemmas involves being mindful of talking with and listening to her community of colleagues, to get a sense of the details she may be missing, details so important to the building of relationships. She also values her time connecting with another women in her school district, a woman with whom she shares her dilemmas.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule tell us that "women are interested in what can be learned from the particular" (1986, p. 184). Margie's work may be seen as another thread she weaves and re-weaves. Her part-time work, while allowing time for her own children, creates a tension she lives with at her own school.

Mother/Teacher/Administrator

As a teacher and a mother, Margie's vision has shifted from being concerned about her own image as a teacher to how children are feeling about their learning. She told of how much more child centered she perceives herself to be from raising her own children. Her stories tell of that shift in perception.

When Margie taught before she had her own children, she was quite bothered by children with runny noses because of the unpleasant outward signs of their illness. From having lived through many illnesses with her own daughters, her concern has since shifted to how the children may be feeling inside. She is empathetic towards their feelings of pain and discomfort.

One day, as a teacher before she had her own children, Margie saw an angry little girl spit on the school windows. She was disturbed by the little girl's behaviour and made her clean it off with hot water. The girl's father later came back and felt that Margie had been too hard on his daughter. Margie stood firm, feeling she had done the right thing. In sharing this story with me, Margie told of how differently she would work through this incident now. She spoke of her shift from judging a child's action to now wanting to know why a child would feel so angry inside. She would instead focus on building a caring relationship with the child, to support the little girl through difficulties she may be experiencing.

A Journey Through School

For one of our times together, I had the pleasure of touring Margie's school, a French-Immersion school that houses the district's administrative office for student support services. As we walked through the hallways, I saw the spaces and artifacts that are the setting and contexts for Margie's stories as a mother in administration. Her stories of administration also continue the threads of continuity she lives as a mother and a teacher.

The school picture.

Each year, a school picture with all of the children and staff is taken. These pictures hang in the main hallway, and show the school as one large family. For the picture taken this year, the photographer began by trying unsuccessfully to fit all 485 children and 52 staff into the photo, and became very frustrated in the process as the children grew restless.

Margie found herself running around the school, trying to find a ladder for the photographer to stand on. She and a custodian hauled a large ladder outside and the photographer was able to take the picture. Margie used his story to tell of her work as taking care of the details that fill in the whole picture. "As an administrator I'm a mother to more people, taking them from where they are and helping them with where they're going" (Conversation, April 22, 1992). She sees herself as one who may help children "define who they are and what they stand for and then how to play out (their) beliefs and values" as members of a community of learners (Conversation, June 30, 1992).

Margie has the same vision for her work with teachers. She spoke of the "cornerstone" for her work in administration as "helping people feel really valued, knowing themselves and then problem solving to make those values play themselves out" (Conversation, June 30, 1992).

Inter-weaving Commitments

Bateson (1989) wrote of life as a journey through a landscape towards an end that is unknown, a landscape that is "in constant flux" (p. 6). Like the women in Bateson's stories (1989), Margie's work is a constant recycling of what she has learned in other settings to her work in new settings. She may also be seen as breaking new ground in the landscape, as her journey tells of her search for "the balance between saturation and satiation" in her work as a mother/teacher/administrator (Conversation, April 22, 1992).

Her story is a "maternal conversation" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 98), attentive to the growth of children. Central to the conversation of mothers is that of being good listeners, posing good questions. "Question posing...is central to maternal practice in its most evolved form. Question posing is at the heart of connected knowing." (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986, p. 189).

As a mother, Margie is now more interested in the journey rather than the end, a journey of movement between her own needs as a professional and the needs of her family. Her spotlights shift to where she feels she is most needed. Carr (1966) used an organic metaphor to talk about life, a metaphor that also tells of Margie's life:

> The whole of life appears to have a great longing and reaching out. The trees and plants are just the product of the longings of the root down there in the quiet earth, longing to get above ground into the freedom of the light and air...We want to push on too, to know more and do more things and peer into the unknown, and get a glimpse of the mystery beyond. I suppose the desire is growth. (p. 184)

Bateson's (1989) stories of women's lives tell of the enhancing rather than competing nature of multiple commitments. She wrote that "we are nurtured by our work and that we can combine different kinds of tasks so they feed each other-mostly-instead of competing. Implicit in everything we do is a longing for synergy...not this replacing that, but this enhancing that" (p. 238). It is through viewing Margie's lifescape that we may celebrate these connections and to envision possibilities for what they might look like for ourselves and others.

Chapter 9

Reflections

Our stories tell of how we live with tensions and paradoxes, of the weave and pull of the many threads of our lives as women in teaching. The stories of Darlene, Libby, and Margie tell of mothers in teaching who find ways to weave and re-weave their threads of knowing as mothers into new contexts and communities.

Commitment as an Ethic of Caring

For Darlene, Libby, and Margie, commitment is not a linear continuance of a particular career structure. Like the women in Nias' study (1981), it is instead a living out of an "ethic of caring" (Noddings, 1986, p. 498). Their commitment is a faithfulness to relationships, to nurturing and maintaining the growth of their own children. This faithfulness also extends to their work in schools. They share a commitment to their profession, a sense of a global responsibility to the ongoing growth of their school communities. This is lived out in the intensity and energy of their day-to-day teaching. They are serious about their work and have a strong professional ethic, an ethic shown in the care they take with their students.

Their career paths are not hierarchical. Instead, like the women in

Evetts study (1987) and Young's research on women's careers (1989), their lives in teaching unfold one step at a time. They venture in many directions, carving new paths and laying down new roads with pieces from the past. However, as Bateson (1989) tells us, there is a sense of order within a life of improvisation, threads of continuity holding the web of life together:

> You cannot put together a life willy-nilly from odds and ends. Even in a crazy quilt, the various pieces, wherever they come from, have to be trimmed and shaped and arranged so they fit together, then firmly sewn to last through time and keep out the cold. Most quilts are ambitious: they involve the imposition of a new pattern...the basic sense of continuity allows improvisation. Composing a life involves an openness to possibilities and the capacity to put them together in a way that is structurally sound. (pp. 62,63)

With each of their moves, the three women wove the threads of their past experiences into new settings as they looked for ways to connect in new communities.

The three women's stories tell of their ability to adapt and change while at the same time seeing the connections within the diversities of experience. A commitment to relationships demands the capacity to adapt and change, to weave the familiar with the new. Ruddick (1989) wrote about this as maternal work:

> The work of fostering growth provokes or requires a welcoming response to change...A nurturing mother must at the same time hold close and welcome change. The welcoming attitude, comparable to the humility of preservative love, is the most exigent intellectual demand on those who foster growth. Children are expected to change; rapid conversations, shifts of interests, new loves and sudden hates are part of childhood life...Mothers also change. (p. 89)

Each of the women's lives shows us how stories of mothering are threads that are woven into their work as teachers.

The women's visions of commitment to relationships parallel Noddings' belief in the importance of developing "interpersonal reasoning" (1991, p. 158). This is a reasoning that does not priorize principles or responses. Instead, it is marked by openness, flexibility, and responsiveness, "attachment and connection rather than separation and abstraction" (p. 158). Darlene, Libby, and Margie are creators and maintainers of relationships, adapting and responding according to the individual needs of those for whom they care. Day to day, they live with the perplexities and intricacies of caring for others.

Connections

As mothers, Darlene, Libby, and Margie remained connected with their profession either by working in their children's classrooms, or by remaining connected with other women in teaching who were also raising their own children. These connections were a natural part of growing and learning with their own children. They never really left teaching. Returning to the classroom as a paid professional was a continuation of the threads of connection they had maintained.

They were interviewed for positions by people who knew them or knew of the work they had done in classrooms before they had their children. When they were ready to return to teaching, they were hired almost immediately: Libby was called by a principal she knew from her own children's schools; Darlene had her choice of three positions with the school division for which she had previously taught; Margie was interviewed and hired by a school board administrator who knew of her work through a teacher from another city.

The paths the three women journey on are not ones easily travelled. Each feels the pull between her teaching and her family. The nature of their commitment as an ethic of caring means that their sense of responsibility lies with teaching and family, not one or the other. The intensity of both at times leaves them with a sense of not being able to truly fulfil either one. Darlene spoke of teaching as "feeling like you're running on a treadmill" (Conversation, June 18, 1992). This sense of never being finished was particularly apparent during our conversations. Like Young's experiences in research with women (1989), I felt I was borrowing time already at a premium. We were often interrupted by unexpected demands and I watched in amazement as each woman calmly dealt with the problems at hand.

When we spoke of the future, all three women envisioned change for themselves. Their plans were not specific but they saw themselves moving either to a different school, to a full time position, or to spending more time at home. These changes would be a continuation of connections, possibilities created from their past and present work. They are learners and they look for opportunities to continue to grow and learn both personally and professionally.

Curriculum as a Moving Form

It is perhaps through viewing the lives of women like Darlene, Libby, and Margie, that we may begin to see Grumet's vision of curriculum as a moving form (1988), an event rather than an object. Their lives show an interweaving of the personal and the professional, an ebb and flow of past knowledge through present experiences.

The three women's lives are not static, therefore neither are their classrooms. Their classrooms change as their experiences with their own children bring a new intensity to areas previously shadowed. Becoming mothers added many new dimensions, views of school through the eyes of children and of parents. They see the world of children differently, perhaps more profoundly than they did before.

If we consider the definition of curriculum vitae as "the course of one's life", Margie, Libby, and Darlene show us that there are possibilities to broaden this to mean "the experiences of one's life". Their experiences as mothers tell of how their teaching has changed through living and learning with their own children. Their curriculum is a journey in the middle ground between their personal and professional knowledge.

Searching for a Middle Ground

Margie spoke of the ongoing journey of shaping a balance between the needs of her family and her own needs as a professional. While "balance" may indicate a finality, an end to the search, her story instead tells of a balance that moves, a shifting of focus as lights fade and then brighten again. Libby and Darlene also shared stories of shifting spotlights, movement in their lives from teaching to mothering to teaching. Kennedy's stories parallel the lives of these three women as she wrote about weaving "back and forth between home and school" between her own children and the children in her classroom (1992, p. 46). Grumet (1988) painted an image of this movement when she wrote about the lights and shadows of the experience of teaching:

> The source of light, like human knowledge, is always situated, here or there, rising or setting, or just breaking through as the clouds pass. The figure is never fully illuminated. Light moves through time as well as space, and so clear seeing is burdened with all the limitations of human consciousness, always situated in spatial perspectives and temporal phases. (pp. 60. 61)

Together, these women's lives tell of a journey through the middle ground, the space created between their work as mothers and their work as teachers. This is a space where multiple commitments come together, a third dimension where they create their own scripts, "in their own terms" (Attanucci, 1988, p. 206). They design their terms in the context of caring for others as well as for themselves.

For each of them, the space is pliable and fluid, a pushing of the boundaries where their lives as mothers and as teachers overlap. They imagine many possibilities as their lives grow and change with their children. Willard (1988) wrote about the self-enhancing nature of being a mother:

> Mothering, which brings with it the necessity to make choices that involve the well-being of oneself and others, provides an opportunity

> to redefine one's understanding of the place of the self in such decisions. (p. 231)

Darlene, Libby, and Margie show us how much broader that middle ground is becoming, a space, that for many, is not visible nor valued.

While exploring this space, the women remain grounded in what they value for themselves as well as for their families and profession. To know what it means to be cared for is to know the possibilities of caring for oneself and, in turn, of caring for others. As Bateson (1989) tells us, caring for ourselves is connected to self-esteem, "with the implication that one who is cherished is important and valuable for his or her own sake" (p. 145).

Our changing vision of women's lives may celebrate the transformations that evolve in exploring the middle ground. This may be the space created where we all find ways to interweave multiple commitments.

Possibilities

My research portrait writing referred to two layers of collaboration in narrative; the conversations and the writing. These are ongoing throughout the research story, interwoven, moving back and forth, sometimes happening at the same time. Through writing this thesis, I realized the possibilities for a third layer.

The conversations the women and I engaged in tell of this third layer of collaborative construction and reconstruction of stories. This is lived when our stories reach out, through this text, to the lives of others who may begin to see new possibilities for their own lives. Stafford (1991) wrote about the power of sharing stories:

> A story saves life a little at a time by making us see and hear and taste our lives and dreams a little more deeply. A story does not rescue life at the end, heroically, but all along the road, continually. I do not make a story; the story makes me. (p. 28)

Through stories, we learn from each other and learn to rely on each other for comfort, support, acceptance, and guidance.

> Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems...The invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And, of course, the remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning, and researching to improve the human condition. Telling and listening to stories can be a powerful sign of regard--of caring--for one another. (Noddings & Witherall, 1991, p. 280)

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